



Town of Rockingham
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Rockingham Conservation Commission

MONDAY, September 12, 2016

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Mike Ghia, Chair, with a quorum at 7:00. Present: Mike Ghia, Paul Wilson, Amy Howlett, Peter Bergstrom, Devin Smith, Guy Payne, and Tom Heron; no one was absent.

1. Approve Minutes of July Meeting (No Meeting in August)

Motion to approve, Tom, second, Amy. Passed.

2. Recruitment and Logistics

Fred Bennett resigned and was thanked for his service. He had started building a web site for the RCC; Amy agreed to ask him for what he had done on that so far.

That leaves us with 7 members, which is enough according to our bylaws (we need to have 5 to 9 members). Any new member would fill out the rest of Fred's term. We decided not to advertise for new members at this time, but ask in March when some members may not want to sign up for a new term.

3. Coordination with Planning Commission

Mike will check with Chuck Wise about next steps; no one present knew if the proposal to separate planning and zoning functions had moved forward. Chuck asked us in July for a letter to his group asking for more zoning protection for Herricks Cove; Tom agreed to discuss next steps on that with Chuck and report back to us at our October meeting.

4. Follow-up: Trail Connection possibilities between Pinnacle Lands and Rockingham

No progress to report. Paul will ask Vanessa Stern (Bald Hill Committee of Pinnacle Assoc.) if she has any ideas about this. Mike will talk to Sam Fletcher about VAST use of the trail along the Saxtons River that might become part of a foot path. Peter will recirculate the list of landowners along the VAST trail to RCC members so the group can consider contacting them.

5. Herricks Cove and CT River

Two activities on the river are coming up: Source-to-Sea Clean-up, Fri-Sat, Sept. 23-24, and the Paddle Battle, Sun. Sept. 25.

We reviewed a letter from a consultant working for TransCanada about a dredging application they have submitted for maintenance dredging at the boat ramp at Herricks Cove. They did not

attach the application, so Peter said he would review it at the Town Offices soon. Amy moved, and Peter seconded, a motion that Peter will draft a letter in response to the application with RCC comments. The main recommendation will be to avoid or minimize any damage to the submerged aquatic vegetation that grows near the boat ramp, since it provides habitat and/or food for fish, shellfish, and waterfowl.

6. Other Activities Natural Resources

Regional Meeting of Conservation Commission Sponsored by AVCC, others
Newfane Union Hall, Tuesday September 20th 6-8 pm

Mike plans to attend. This is in addition to the other regional meetings of conservation commissions in Windham County; next one of those will be in November in Guilford.

Follow-up from Saxtons River Tree planting

Peter reported that he counted live and dead trees at two of the planting sites on 9/2 and found that 51% of the trees at the Westminster site had green leaves, while 73% of the trees at the Rockingham site had green leaves. Russ Hodgkins (Westminster Town Manager) estimated higher survival in Westminster, about 70-80%. Survival had not been counted in Grafton as of 9/7. The other two towns want to do another planting in 2017 and Peter thought we should do another in Rockingham as well, and the group agreed. He asked the group to suggest any potential sites in Rockingham, ideally with few trees or knotweed in the buffer at present. The landowner has to agree in writing to leaving a 35 foot undisturbed riparian buffer.

Update on Stream and Water Body Naming Project –Wrap up and Mapping

The meeting of the State Library Board on the day after our last meeting, on July 12, ratified the name recommendations of the RCC. In particular the board voted unanimously for the “Sokoki Falls” name rather than the name that ANR favored, “Brockways Mills Falls” which had some, but limited, historical use. The USGS decided to implement 8 of the 32 names without referring them to the US Board of Geographic Names since they were already on USGS topographic maps with no changes to spelling; those 8 names are now in the GNIS database.

Next steps: Peter will talk to Chuck Wise about how the town will use the new waterway names in planning. He will also talk to Jeff Nugent, WRC about online mapping potential, such as maps that show watershed boundaries.

River Water Quality Testing 2016

Due to the dry summer there were only a few samples with high bacteria levels. We added a new site on the Saxtons River near I-91 on a field belonging to Harold Buchner, to see if there was a source of bacteria in the mid-river area. However, we did not have the high bacteria values from low flow samples at the Twin Falls mid-river site that we saw in most of the low flow samples in 2015, and we saw none of these at the new site. Mike asked Peter to include Williams River results in the postings to Facebook in 2017, since he only posted about the Saxtons River in the past. Peter agreed to do this. Peter will ask SevWA if they can send a summary of the annual results to each town that has rivers that are sampled.

7. Energy Committee

Municipal Solar Research Initiative Continued Gravel Pit Proposal Green Lantern

Nothing to report. Guy will check with Chip Stearns and report back in October.

Windham County Renewable Energy Program (WCREP)—Proposal through Clean Energy Development Fund, looking for community input on what renewable energy they want, before they make funding decisions. There will be a public meeting on Sept. 29. Guy will get more details and report back later.

PACE in Rockingham- Implementation and Follow-up. Guy does not know of any applications yet. Efficiency Vermont has a PACE coordinator who is accepting applications.

Energy Committee Educational Programming Planning - They have one program planned on Mon. Oct. 24, 7-8:30, program at RFPL on wet basements.

8. Announcements of Events of relevance to the RCC Mission-all.

Septic tank workshop in Springfield, Sept. 17 (this Saturday).

Sustainable home tour, Oct. 15, 10-4. Seven homes on the tour, sponsored by SEON; two are in Saxtons River.

9. Confirm NEXT MEETING Monday, October 10th (Columbus Day).

Adjourned at 9:00 PM; Moved by Paul and seconded by Tom, passed.

Minutes prepared and submitted by Peter Bergstrom, Clerk, on September 13, 2016.