

MINUTES
Underhill Conservation Commission
8/12/19
Underhill Town Hall

Present: Karen McKnight, Nancy McRae, Dan Steinbauer, Amy Golodetz, Laurie Graham, Peter Hiskes,

Guests: Steven Webster, Jens Hilke

Absent: Daphne Tanis, Betsy Chapek, Pat Lamphere

Welcome and Opening Remarks: Karen welcomed and reviewed agenda.

Public Comment: None

Approval Minutes: 7/8/19 Approval postponed until next meeting.

Time: 6:30pm - 8:15pm

Next Meeting: 9/9/19 at 6:30pm at Underhill Town Hall

Natural Resources Planning- Town Plan: Jens Hilke, VT Fish & Wildlife

- **Mapping:** Mapping work is done by Chittenden County CCRPC, Future Land Use Map and Natural Resource Map are examples. There is mapping data available but missing site-specific data that impact parcel-scale decisions, wetlands and show rare/threatened/endangered species.
- Possibly add into Town Plan that Underhill might want to consider hiring a consultant to conduct a town natural resources inventory, (municipal planning grant through CCRCP) Jericho's inventory was conducted by Arrowwood Environmental RFP Science to Action, in 2014, with towns Richmond Bolton and Huntington.
 - We would work with private land owners to let them know Arrowwood would be doing an inventory on their land; offers landowner regulatory predictability for possible subdivision, knowing the inventory and what's there to know what resources they already have in their development proposal.
- **Town Plan:** Jens Hilke suggests following Hinesburg Town Plan Chapter 10 Implementation, every policy statement in the plan is in a spread sheet identifying cost and who is in charge of it.
- What resources, where they are, and what standard to be specific and clear in the town plan. Community Values Mapping (done in Johnson) what they love about town, small groups, 'scenic' 'cultural' 'economic' etc. int different value groups.
- Steve suggests brainstorming what we care about most, identifying what needs strengthening/missing in Town Plan.
- Jens Hilke suggests big picture items in the town plan: Have one piece on 'Forests' multiple values we get from forests, connected pattern of forests and connectivity. Lay it out by scale, from big to small picture. Habitats within the forest. Landscape, community, species scale. Layout with increasing specificity. Water Network, multiple values within the waters. Geologic concepts within the Forest section. Agriculture its own category at bottom.
- Currently we have concerns as invasive species, flood resiliency, climate change: Jens Hilke suggests concerns could be "sprawl" and "forest fragmentation". Suggested idea is a separate category on Challenges.
- Amy notes that Brattleboro Town Plan is structured with 4 goals, 7 policies, 23 actions in each section throughout the plan.
- State Forest & State Park designations and plans from the state's plan; consider the zoning adjacent to state forest lands to provide buffer for state forest and more contiguous habitat, consider parking and recreation; this can be addressed in transportation section of the town plan.
- Collaboration: Jens Hilke reminds us not limit review to just Natural Resource Section, information should also be in other sections of the Town Plan. More cross-references and balance so that our section alligns with the other sections of the Plan. To meet this need we will be working with Planning Commission.
 - Planning Commission has asked us to work with them on Natural Resources section, due in October / early November.
 - Jens Hilke will review a first draft of our section in a Word document that tracks changes.
- Town Plan guides and develops Zoning Ordinances. Zoning separates uses and Overlays are used where underlying zones still apply, but adding on additional guidelines in. This can provide subdivision clarification.
- **Next Steps:** Select the big items for the next 8 years, examples include focusing on forest blocks, habitat connectivity, inventory. Meet with PC commission, work on what our goals are, then contact Jens Hilke.

Invasive Species Plan Update: Steven Webster

- 3 patches of Knotweed spotted by Karen in gravel pit on Beartown Rd. Riparian area.
 - Amy suggests town crew help to dig up / cut up patches, keep it from expanding. Cut it, watch it, keep it from spreading.
- Teaming up and training with town road crew. Organize a training that would educate road crew about what knotweed is and how it is easily transported and spread.
- Selectboard has determined that controlling invasives is important and has approved Chittenden County Forester, Ethan Tapper, to consult with the town about management. The UCC will be in touch with Ethan Tapper.
- Steve and the Task Force would like to educate the town on past/current Japanese Knotweed remediation strategies and techniques as well as any decisions from Ethan Tapper. We will continue this discussion for next **Invasives Task Force Meeting Monday, 8/26/19 at Town Hall @ 6:30.**
- Book, 'The New Wild' by Fred Pearce, 'Why Invasive Species Will Be Nature's Salvation' presented by Dan Steinbauer.
- Dan has been speaking to a few homeowners near/on River Rd. about control of knotweed and has had positive response.
- Steve has seen impact since digging out knotweed in Crane Brook Trail area. There have been volunteers for each work day, but would like to see more volunteers from the town. Steve suggests focusing on key trouble spots like the new Beartown Rd. gravel pit before it has a chance to be established, and before gravel moves to new location. In the recent work days, Japanese Knotweed crowns and bottoms are taken to compost facility, stalks are left to dry. Dry stalks are not establishing roots. Pulling, rather than cutting, removes a good amount of Japanese Knotweed rhizome.
- Next Japanese Knotweed Removal **Work Party Saturday morning 8/17/19 anytime between 9am-12pm.**
- Steve suggests apology for last year's accidental cutting on Shearer property. They have been helping with knotweed removal, but no one has reached out about the accidental cutting last year. Steve will type up letter and send it.

Crane Brook Trails Update: Nancy McRae

- Anton Kelsey is going to discuss Crane Brook Trails at Recreation Committee meeting, we would like to walk it with a couple of Recreation Committee members. Nancy met with Nate, he is going to see about mowing trail areas. Would like to incorporate CBCD parking area; Brian spoke with Nate who said this could happen within the fall or spring.
- Proposal to selectboard about parking, signs, trail maintenance and upgrades.

8:15 adjournment