

TOWN OF FITZWILLIAM

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, February 1, 2021
7:00 PM

Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conservation Commission met remotely via phone/video conferencing, as allowed under NH Executive Order 2020-04, Emergency Order #12.

Members Present: Paul Kotila, Kevin Woolley, Hiel Lindquist, Susan Silverman, Beth Vanney, and Terri Robbitts

Members Absent:

Guests Present:

Chairman Paul Kotila called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Working Session to update the Natural Resource Inventory

Chairman Kotila began the working session discussing the Center Harbor Natural Resource Inventory. He liked how it was put together and how the maps were separate from the NRI. He did not like how Fitzwilliam's NRI have maps that fold out and are static. He then asked the Commission what they thought should be included.

Susan Silverman felt the NRI should be a more robust document that builds into the Master Plan. She would like to see interactive and digital mapping be used. She felt it would be more useful and beneficial to the Town to be forward thinking and be more integrated with other Town documents.

Mr. Kotila stated that, in the past, the Commission had help putting the NRI together. He suggested using Dr. Rick Van de Poll to assist with the fundamental core of the document. Beth Vanney commented that the Center Harbor document is alive. Mr. Kotila agreed and stated we must have electronic mapping and not just pdf's to benefit both the Town and landowners.

Ms. Vanney felt we must show change over time and the current status of resources. She also mentioned there being no section on fish. Ms. Silverman agreed; the current NRI contained no implementation plan or recommendations. She would like to see a section on contamination threats. Mr. Kotila stated there is no information on aquatic wildlife, and felt that information is most likely readily available through Fish & Game. But there is no systematic information.

Hiel Lindquist felt a section on tree identification with information from the Forest Society. He discussed how almost all native tree species in the state are declining. A section on trees and plants could address this. For example, there is a buckthorn infestation along the powerlines.

Ms. Vanney felt there should be more quantified information through a review of past recommendations. She asked why the contamination section is so slim. Mr. Kotila felt it was because no testing or studies have been done. We can identify potential sites and can investigate further. This could go beyond the Meadowood site. Ms. Silverman felt this could help other Land Use boards (ZBA/Planning Board) with applications and the future of properties if information is known. It can be beneficial once identified as there is an overlap with zoning – NRI, Shoreland, and Wetland – as one builds on the other. This could be integrated better with the Master Plan to support each other. She suggested perhaps having a joint meeting. Mr. Kotila stated the NRI is an inventory and we can now look at trends and/or patterns. For example, increasing/decreasing of forest land, water quality, what has been happening over the past 10 years, etc.

Ms. Vanney suggested updating unfragmented lands. Mr. Kotila mentioned looking at average lot sizes as fragmentation makes it difficult to maintain contiguous wildlife corridors. Ms. Silverman stated that Center Harbor included information on vernal pools and perennial streams. Ms. Vanney liked including that information as it helps connect people to nature surrounding them and causes them to care more.

Mr. Kotila suggested hiring Dr. Van de Poll to help the Commission write the NRI. He is familiar with Town and did a great job with the Center Harbor NRI. Mr. Kotila then asked the Commission what guidance we can provide him. Ms. Vanney felt the Commission should try to re-engineer and re-create the Center Harbor NRI first before approaching him. Mr. Kotila felt it was beyond the Commission's expertise. Ms. Silverman stated the Commission are guides and felt this is a bigger arc of a project than prime wetlands. Kevin Woolley suggested approaching Dr. Van de Poll to see if he is available. Mr. Kotila stated he will put together a list of components of what contents and pieces of the report we would like Dr. Van de Poll's assistance on.

Mr. Woolley commented that he liked the ecological and scenic resources areas from Center Harbor. Ms. Vanney suggested including overall trail maps in the NRI.

Ms. Silverman asked what the timeline is for the update. Mr. Kotila felt a year. From discussions, the Commission is looking to do a significant reorganization and include more information. The focus has changed and this will be much more than just an update. Ms. Silverman suggested integrating an educational component. When presenting the new NRI, the Commission could present new initiatives like workshops or hikes as an opportunity to embrace our surroundings. Mr. Kotila agreed stating it is a good opportunity to learn more about what is around us and be more informed about what is going on/happening in the community.

Old Business

Mr. Kotila relayed to the Commission that the appraisal report for the Schupack property has been received. At this point, it is a confidential report and he will send it to the Commission for their review. He asked the Commission to provide their feedback at the next meeting as it is a thorough document.

The LUC updated the Commission on the case before the Commission at the next meeting. The applicant is before the ZBA for a shed within the setbacks and has asked the Commission to help resolve the roof runoff issue. However, there is also a run-off issue from the road in that area and others may join the meeting to discuss that topic, even though it is not part of the Commission's purview. Ms. Vanney felt salt usage on roads is a Commission topic. Ms. Silverman agreed and suggesting having a conversation with the road agent. However, she stated road run-off is a BoS issue. Ms. Vanney asked if the applicant had obtained state approval for the shed. The LUC stated the applicant said the state is not interested in regulating it. Ms. Silverman felt that the shed was not originally considered part of the entire project.

The LUC then updated the Commission on another pending case at the former liquor store. The applicant is scheduled to go before the Planning Board for a Site Plan Review, but the property has wetlands and the Commission will be asked to provide a recommendation.

With there being no further business, Mr. Kotila adjourned the meeting at 8:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Nolan
Land Use Coordinator

Minutes approved as written on February 22, 2021.