



Conservation Commission

Town of Hinesburg
10632 Route 116 Hinesburg VT 05461
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Meeting Minutes - February 9, 2016

- Approved 3/08/16 -

Members Present: Meg Handler, Alison Lesure, Merrily Lovell

Members Absent: Bill Marks

Guests: Bob Hyams

1. Alison called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.
2. Greenspace Plan Discussion: Alex Weinhagen attended this meeting in order to discuss the Greenspace Plan (GSP). Alex said that Bill Marks and Alex had a conversation in the spring of 2015 about needing to revise the GSP. Some examples: Strategies at the front; delete certain Scenic Views recommendations, especially #23 and #25; 25 b, g and h should be removed. Scenic views can be very subjective and difficult to come to consensus on and develop regulations around. Other points about scenic views could remain, but only if the CC thinks the Town should be working on this. The Scenic Views issue has become more relevant recently in the context of large-scale solar projects.

This type of “Open Space Plan” usually stands alone within various other towns, but it can be used to guide planning. In Hinesburg, our Town Plan has contained a recommendation to create an Open Space Plan almost since its inception. About 10 years ago, the Planning Commission requested that the CC create such a plan. This plan was designed to talk about the natural resources and recommendations on how to protect those resources. This is a report or planning tool to be used to guide planning efforts. There is overlap with the Town Plan, which has a natural resource section. The Planning Commission has reviewed but never approved the current draft of the GSP. At this point, the CC should therefore “own it” as a reference and as an advocacy tool. The Planning Commission would like to pull certain recommendations and place in the Town Plan. However, we need to be very clear where this plan fits into the town plan, the work of the Planning Commission etc.

Perhaps the CC should write an introduction that explains the purpose of the GSP. It would be nice to sync review of the GSP with the Town Plan (5 to 10 year cycle). It was discussed that the way it is written now, it is an advocacy tool, not something likely to be adopted by the Planning Commission and the Select Board without further revisions.

Many of the maps are outdated. Alex recommends that we substitute the official maps from the Town Plan. That would make this document less confusing. Also recommends that we integrate the elevation map into the section on elevation within the body of the GSP.

The Town Plan is getting re-written right now. Perhaps instead, or in addition, the CC should focus on re-writing the Town Plan. The CC agreed that we would like to participate in revision of Chapter Four of the Town Plan. We plan to work on a revised draft to submit to Alex this month.

3. VT Gas Pipeline – Discussion with Alex about the pipeline going through Geprags. Perhaps we should talk to Trevor Lashua about the Select Board’s position. Merrily has already reached out to Trevor, and he said that the Town’s attorney has been in communication with VT Gas. The attorney is aware of the fear that VT Gas will just proceed without clarifying the Town’s position. Discussion also of the recent post on Front Porch Forum raising the question of whether anyone objects to the pipeline going through Geprag’s.

The members decided to post the CC’s position on Front Porch Forum Motion. Alison will post a statement on Front Porch Forum to the following effect: The CC feels strongly that because Geprags is a beloved and highly used public park, there should be some measures in place to preserve the recreational and wildlife resources of the park. The CC has been charged with the care and preservation of this park. Therefore, the CC believes that the Town must put in place requirements that VT Gas restoration happen in a way that minimizes impact and preserves the value of the park. As of yet, the CC has not been made aware of any such requirements. Alison will edit this statement before posting it on Front Porch Forum. Voted on it: Unanimously passed this motion.

4. Town Meeting – Requested a large map of the town from Alex to be used for a wildlife survey. Alex agreed to make one entitled 2016 Annual Hinesburg Town Meeting Wildlife Survey.
5. Approved 26 January 2016 minutes, all in favor.
6. Other Business: Bob is an awesome resource on invasive plants, will discuss projects with him further. Tabled invasive species workshop and sponsoring movie screening until next meeting.

Next Meeting: February 23, 2016

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Meg Handler