

Tunbridge Conservation Commission meeting minutes 10.3.2018

(Italics indicate info added by Michael, 10/11/18)

In attendance: Betsy G, Michael S, Eliza M, Aaron W, Brenda F

Discussed take-homes from the 4 towns wildlife talk the week prior:

(Jens Hilke from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department will tell us about his work on the Vermont Conservation Design, an ecological study aimed at sustaining our Vermont forests, waters, wildlife and plants for future generations.)- organized by the *Sharon Planning Commission*

- Meeting provided a good opportunity to learn more about the initiative but also engage with local committees
- How do we develop better local information to use in town planning?
- Working with surrounding towns on the conservation design seems to make a lot of sense

Michael updated us that the VT Council on Urban Development has agreed to conduct a 4 town exercise. Will keep us posted on scheduling. *To begin in February 2019.*

Talked at length about what the TCC can do for the town in the near future. One big theme was an interest to develop educational/outreach opportunities for town residents that may then also help with increasing town knowledge of local resources.

- Everyone agreed that the vernal pool workshop in the spring was a success and we should consider another next spring.
- Combining educational talks (speaker series) with in-field workshops is of interest..but what topics?
 - Winter tracking - Ed Sharron of NPS has a good program. Aaron will talk with Ed.
 - Cat Buxton- mushrooms?
 - Invasive species - multi-town? - *Meredith Whitney (Forest Pest Education Coordinator, Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program), Mike Bald (owner of Got Weeds?)*
 - Water rights: *Patricia Beavers as a contact*
 - Trees - connections between forest management and wildlife, joint management of land to promote large forest tracks, etc *Paul Harwood, Dave Paginelli (Orange Co Forester)*
 - Michael and Aaron offered to help kick this off and exchange some ideas.

It was mentioned that developing educational opportunities involving kids to help develop more information related to the town's resources would be a great idea. Perhaps a bioblitz or engaging kids and teachers in the vernal pool project would be good starts. Making bat or owl boxes may also be options. Would be good to coordinate with school soon to gauge interest.

Michael mentioned that there is a trail grant available

Contact: Sherry Winnie from the Recreational Trails Program with the state. The initial pre-application is due November 1st and the full app is due January 1st.

Short discussion about access rights of the public on town roads

- Recent concerns of residents restricting access to legal trails
- Interest in promoting the usage of these trails (and maybe maintenance) to support town-wide recreation
- I believe we have an inventory of the trails/class 3 roads--- what do we need to do next? Should the most likely to be used for trails be denoted, or are they already? Are there landowners that should be contacted? Is there enough interest in developing and maintaining as trails?
- Need to discuss with the selectboard.

Brenda Fields visited to share her perspectives with the TCC

- Brenda provided some background on the town forest. She mentioned that the town forest was established in the 1940s (40 acres) to preserve a town water source
- There are some bike trails in the forest that a group started, but sounded like they are steep and may not be the best for biking?? WHO has walked these recently? Are they in good shape?
- Concerned about water rights in the town forest (and perhaps other areas in town). Some residents have rights but are there stipulations to how much they can draw? Related concern about development in town in general and over use of water such as for agricultural use, which may not be regulated.