

Natural Resources Committee

DRAFT Minutes

Apr 11, 2018

Committee Members: Barrie Bailey, Colin Davis, Peter Grant, Stan Grzyb, Wendy Sue Harper (Chair), Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Jim Pulver, Susan Smiley, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright

Present: Barrie Bailey, Wendy Sue Harper (Chair), Arabella Holzpfel, Ron Payne, Jim Pulver, Kent Wright

Staff: Kevin Behm

Guests:

Wendy Sue opened the meeting at 6:05. The Jan 10th minutes were moved for approval. (Barrie motion, Kent 2nd). Minutes accepted.

ACT 171 Forest Land Planning

Wendy Sue stated that the Committee had reviewed the draft forest planning legislation in 2016 when it was being considered and had some concerns on how a forest block was defined. In the final version a ‘forest block’ is ‘a contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession and not currently developed for nonforest use...’. The phrase ‘not currently developed for nonforest use’ seems to be open to some interpretation. Paul wondered how low density lots would be considered – is 1 lot/20 or 40 acres considered developed? Jim mentioned that the definition also allows agricultural, silvicultural and forestry operations in a forest block.

Kevin noted that any town plans or regional plans adopted or amended after January 1, 2018 are required to include on its land use map and in its land use element ‘those areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation...’ This doesn’t necessarily mean that forested blocks are conservation areas, but proposed development policies must address maintenance of the forest habitat, water quality, timber production and recreation values in the area.

Wendy Sue recently watched a webinar presented by Fish & Wildlife on mapping forest blocks in Waitsfield and crafting policies that address habitat connectors. Kevin said that he could get a copy of the webinar and post it on the ACRPC web page – [\[www.acrpc.org/forest-resource-planning/\]](http://www.acrpc.org/forest-resource-planning/)

Barrie suggested that a municipality could identify forested blocks where development should be limited and use contiguous forestland policies to prevent encroachment of any solar array development that proposed to clear large areas.

The Committee adjourned at 7:00