

Natural Resources Committee

DRAFT Minutes

Jun 8, 2016

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

Present: Barrie Bailey, Nick Causton, Wendy Sue Harper, Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright

Staff: Kevin Behm

Guest:

Wendy Sue opened the meeting at 6:15. The March 9th minutes were moved for approval. (Arabella motion, Peter 2nd).

Paul asked about the size of a forest clear-cut allowed. He thought it was 30 acres. Kevin wasn't sure but he would check. (update – a 40 acre clear-cut requires a permit under the 'Heavy Cut' regulation.)

Kent asked about the relationship between kame terrace deposits and sand and gravel areas. Wendy Sue noted that kame terraces were glacial deposits and were often composed of sand and gravel. They also functioned as valuable aquifer recharge areas. Barrie mentioned that these areas also comprise valuable habitat and are being studied by Chris Fastie at Middlebury College.

Minutes passed with all in favor and Nick abstaining.

Water Quality funding DEC/CCRPC

Kevin updated the Committee on the water quality grant with DEC. He intended to do a large screen demonstration of the culvert/ road erosion data collection application, but instead passed around the actual application on an iphone because the website wasn't updating. The municipal permit was discussed and the 3-acre impervious surface rule was mentioned. The culvert and road erosion work were all being accomplished in preparation for the municipal permit in 2017. The next Commission meeting in July will have a public meeting on water quality and the municipal permit.

Forest Bill – H.857 –

The Forest Integrity Bill has passed and is awaiting signature. Several forest related bills were merged into H. 857. The bill now includes a section on forestry operations, state lands, fire suppression and forest integrity planning. Regional and municipal plans now include the goals to manage Vermont forestlands to improve forest blocks and habitat

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connectors. Land use plans shall now indicate areas that may have special consideration for habitat blocks. Plans may also have specific policies directed at encouragement of minimizing forest fragmentation. Paul had concerns that new policies that limit forest fragmentation would also limit a landowner's ability to develop their lands and in essence constitute a 'takings'. This can be a balancing act when zoning allows a certain number of homes/acre and the town plan has policies that minimize fragmented forests. It will be up to a municipality to craft development guidance that prioritizes areas for their best use while recognizing the resource potential of forests for habitat, flood prevention, climate resilience and forest products. Wendy Sue noted that Monkton has a town committee that looks at opportunities to work with landowners to protect valuable resource land with voluntary conservation or purchase of development rights. Barrie asked if forest land was required in a town plan. Kevin said that the language encourages policies that provide for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors but that they are not required. This is similar to 'conservation' land now except that the purpose is more clearly directed toward forest blocks and specific policies are allowed for forest resource values and functions.

Monkton Surficial Geology –

Wendy Sue introduced a report entitled "Final Report Summarizing the Surficial Geology and Hydrogeology of Monkton, Vermont; Vermont Geological Survey Open File Report 2016-2" by John Van Hoesen. Monkton entered the Vermont Geological Survey's State Map Program to have mapping undertaken of surficial geology and hydrogeology. Monkton was very interested in identifying aquifers and aquifer recharge areas within the community so policies could be enacted for protection and development could be directed to areas with suitable water sources. In addition, the community was interested in locating a possible source of gravel for road maintenance. Monkton provided volunteer labor to help match well-log data to the correct well location.

The report is available from The Vermont Geological Survey here –

http://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/geo/OpenFile/VanHoesen2016_Monkton.pdf

The Committee adjourned at 7:15.