

# Natural Resources Committee

## DRAFT Minutes

*March 26, 2013*

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**Committee Members:** Peter Grant, David Hamilton, Margaret Lowe, Andrea Ochs (Chair), Ed Payne, Mark Pumiglia, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright

**Present:** Margaret Lowe, Andrea Ochs, Mark Pumiglia, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright

**Staff:** Kevin Behm

**Guest:**

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Andrea called the committee to order at 7:15

### **VT Gas pipeline Phase II concerns**

Paul reported on the recent meeting between town representatives and VT Gas on their proposed pipeline project. He is a land owner that may be affected if a route is selected that traverses his property. He is not inclined to offer an easement if he does not receive any benefit from the line. VT Gas has stated that this is a transmission line not a distribution line and very few connection points would be available. He felt the meetings have been informative and cordial however the route decisions should best be made at the landowner level.

The committee asked Kevin to gather information on gas line installations in fresh water for the next meeting.

### **Review of Recommended Actions in the Natural Resource Section.**

The next plan section review is the Forest Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Recommended Actions. Kevin went down the list of actions and noted that the recent forest land initiative with the Dept of Forests identified contiguous areas of high-value forest and wildlife habitat. Forest maps were prepared for each town in the region and town plans and zoning were reviewed to highlight good language that has been adopted. He also noted that the Commission has received an additional grant to assist in making the information widely available in the region. Contiguous habitat mapping had been a high priority action in this plan section as well.

The members briefly discussed the salamander crossings in Salisbury and Monkton noting that crossing nights only occur on warm humid nights in the spring and that the number of salamanders can number into the thousands.

Andrea mentioned pending legislation (H. 526) enabling state oversight of land development in a designated shoreland zone. She referred to a VT Farm Bureau press release critical of the legislation and felt as though local land use control was being usurped by the state. The members agreed that state authority was not needed. Kevin pointed out that a study of town

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planning and zoning had been undertaken by the state and very few towns had adopted shoreland protection strategies. He felt that the study had not been widely circulated and the state had rushed into legislation without considering other means such as education or incentives. [note: this legislation has been tabled for this year in favor of a series of shoreland meetings throughout the state]

The committee adjourned 8:45