

Conservation Commission
Thursday June 16, 2016
7:30pm @ Community Development Department
Approved Minutes

Attendance:

Chairman Justin Pare-present
Vice Chair Lisa Ferissi-present
Pam Skinner-present
James Finn-excused
Wayne Morris-excused
Brian McFarland, alternate-present
Jason Rodgers, alternate-excused
Dave Curto, alternate- (arrived at 7:51pm)

Mr. Dan Guttman, Planning Board member and liaison to the Conservation Commission for the Master Plan, was also in attendance.

Discussion of Draft for Open Space and Natural Resources and Chapter for Master Plan

The Board discussed which sections of the Chapters might be missing and may need to be updated and modernized.

Mr. Guttman reviewed the concept behind a Master Plan for Windham and the importance of updating all the chapters including the one that the Conservation Commission would contribute to.

One potential outcome in revising and updating the chapter is to protect and manage town land via open space resources.

Another outcome or goal is to assess properties that the town owns for conservation and managing them properly.

Mr. McFarland mentioned education; an ecology class is taught at the high school and can be used as outreach. It would be essential that the coursework align with Common Core. However, all high school students must have a certain number of volunteer hours. The Board suggested that high school students could volunteer to remove invasive species as part of their volunteer hours if it could not be integrated into a class like ecology.

Also, adult education classes could also be made available. The Conservation Commission could hold workshops at the library. Such workshops could bring up invasive species that should not be planted as well as species that are good to plant, native species.

Developers often leave open Space but the open space now affords a density bonus on land that would not be viable to build on anyway. For example, a developer cannot build on wetlands but can sometimes receive a density bonus for leaving it as open space.

Department of Transportation, DOT, does currently know invasive species and seeks to manage them regularly. Ms. Ferissi would like to reach out to the Windham Highway Department to see what sort of protections and management might be in place in the town currently.

The Natural Resource Inventory was last done in 1985. It is on file at Community Development. The Board would like to look at this to get some ideas about priorities for the town, then and now.

Quarry Brook School, an outdoor education school in town, may want to be involved in the identification and management of invasive species.

Storm water and aquatic habitat are both of these are part of the Master Plan and a priority for the Board.

Mr. Curto arrived at 7:51pm.

In the Chapter, pgs. 33-39 list Goals and Summaries, Description, Objectives and Implementation Plan

On pgs. 99-130 there are Maps showing the Open Space and Town Owned Land as well as Existing Condition and Analysis

These are the documents that the Board has to work with and improve upon.

Taintor and Associates was hired as a consultant to do this Master Plan.

The Board would like to see a map indicating water quality in town. In 2005, Cobbetts Pond was a pond in peril. Many groups have worked hard to reverse this reality.

Wildlife Action Plan, Water Resources, Wildlife Inventory, and an Endangered Species List were also mentioned as potential content for the chapter.

The Board envisions assigning different sections of the chapter for review and then bring it back to the Board for discussion and approval.

GIS data can also be acquired and added to the chapter as needed.

One or two developments have deeded over their development rights to the town. The land belongs to the homeowner's association and it must remain as open space for potential public use.

Some language that the Committee would like to consider for this chapter: "Existing trail connectivity must be protected. Should the trail need to be relocated, the relocated trail must remain within the limits of the initial sub-division and be constructed by the applicant. The relocated trail may be located within the open space or the setbacks." Also, "All trails must be marked with a granite post before lots are sold" These must be a condition of approval.

The Trails Committee does report to the Planning Board but has often consulted with the Conservation Commission. They are responsible for any trails, on public or private land. There are often members from Planning, Recreation and Conservation on the Trails Committee.

Trails can go through private property. Property owners are not told there are trails and trail easements on the property they purchase which can be quite a surprise for homeowners.

Pg. 123 and 124: List out the trails and different town properties

There are 7 large sections of the Master Plan chapter. Mr. Pare suggested that each Board member take one of the seven sections of the chapter.

Pg. 112-113: pond and lake associations might be wiling to update their own sections with updated data to assist with Master Plan updates

Mr. McFarland will be happy to take the lead on the writing and rewriting of the chapters. There are 30 pages and there are 7 members. If you split up the sections, the lead person would go through the chapter and investigate what research and rewriting would need to be redone.

The Master Plan is not in a Word document format; it is only available as a pdf and will need to be converted. Existing Conditions would be first then Goals and Objectives would be next.

A motion was made by Ms. Skinner to adjourn at 8:31pm. Seconded by Mr. Pare. Vote 5-0. Motion passes.

Respectfully submitted by Anitra Brodeur