

CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE (CTC)
Essex Town Office, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, Vermont Draft

Minutes Tuesday 12/13/2022

Attending: Alan Botula chair, Mike Spaeder Vice Chair ,Shannon Jackson, Ken Signorelli, Steve Dowd, Betsy Dunn clerk, Lauren Gaffney Cohen, ,

Absent:, Erin DeVries Rusty Brink, Chuck Viles Tree Warden

Members of the public: Irene Wrenner

Meeting called to order at 6:33 by Alan Botula Agenda

Item 1. Agenda changes or approval

Betsy reminded Alan that we had passed a motion in October to have development review issues moved to agenda number 4. Alan moved to change the agenda reflecting this past vote. It was seconded by Shannon. Vote 7/0

Agenda Item 2. Introductions

Kent Johnson is the new Town planner He introduced himself and gave a little on his background. He is from Ithaca NY and was a Town Planner there for 15years. He has an abiding interest in Hiking and all things trails He feels this will be a good fit for him. Then Katherine Sonnick introduced herself to us as well She is the new Community Development Director and was hired over the summer. She has come full circle she left Essex 10 years ago as a town planner and is happy to return in her new role. All the members of the committee introduced themselves. We all gave some background on how our previous staffer organized our packets prior to the meeting. Especially concerning any new development that has been discussed at the Planning Commission

Agenda Item 3. Public to be heard

No comments

Agenda Item 4. Development review

1070 Old Pump Road is a large parcel The owner wants to subdivide it with a boundary adjustment. The problem is that they do not have enough frontage and they want to have a shared driveway for three homes. By statute they can have only 2. By changing the boundary line adjustment, they would solve the frontage issue but not the driveway issue. **Kent** wants to wait to get more information. The property is in the "Current Use " program at this time approximately 115 acres. By statute they have to take out of the program 10-acre increments. Kent feels that they need a Master Plan concept on how the land will be used. **Ken** said they need 2 variances. They area they are considering has already been logged and cleared Carbon is now sequestered. They could let it all grow back. Kent noted the value of open meadows and other areas. And how could they restore what happened to the land in the past. They could develop a habitat. **Betsy** asked if he has spoken to Ethan Topper, Chittenden County Forester about a plan for the parcel Kent was not aware of this and would check. **Katherine** suggested changing the "driveway" into a road this would allow for three homes **Lauren** said that it all depends on the district its being built

in whether or not they could do this. And if it's a road the town would not plow it. **Kent** wants to bring this back to the owner and wait until there is more detail.

Agenda Item 5. Short Items

A. Minutes

Several people had not seen the email about the location of the minutes. They looked them over. Ken made a motion to accept the minutes and Shannon seconded it. Vote was 7/0

B. Trail Mapping

Alan is point on this. He looked at a potential trail behind Saybrook that would link up with the Mathieu Forest. But he thought it was not practical. He would like to see a map /table of all the trails that need mapping. Steve asked for it to be a separate file on our web page, so that we could all see it. **Shannon**, indicated that he, Ken and Betsy did map a trail on the Luisser property. There are two trees that have to be removed. We took pictures and filled in the data required for the mapping and a text of how the trail can be used. There is an issue of a variance required on the south side of Brigham Hill Lane if it doesn't already exist. Katherine said they could check into that for us. Alan wants to work with the town's staff. Betsy pointed out that there is an easement on the Brigham Hill Road side of the property so possibly there is one already on the Lane side. Ken had an opportunity to speak with the home owner at 118 Brigham Hill Lane (the property in question) he thought the owner might be amenable to allowing a variance. More to come on this issue.

C. Town Plan Work Group

Ken is point on this. **Ken** suggested that we needed to have a community outreach regarding what the residents want to see in our town. Therefore, they selected 7 sites scattered round town at different times and different days. **Katherine** showed us the cards residents will receive. Very professionally done. The first meeting will be on January 4th. There will be a consistent intro to the topic presented and the people can bring forward other new ideas at the time. Much like community values.

Agenda Item 6. Business Items

A. Caring for the canopy

Alan is point on this. There is a new grant from VT UCF for 2023 Caring for the Canopy. There is 5 thousand dollar grant available. The question is do we want to apply for it. There is a 1:1 cost sharing with them (VT UCF) the grant application is due December 30th. We discussed the Trees that we still must pull and replant.

Many that we pullout will not be able to be replaced in the same site due to utilities underground. Parks and recreation and Public Works must sign off on any trees that we want to pull and replant. The trees that that will be replanted will be 2" caliber in size. We will narrow down to the trees to be pulled and have Chuck Vile walk with

us to determine if it needs pulling and if we can replant. Kent and Katherine will touch base

with Aaron and Ali from Public Works and Parks and recreation respectively to get their input. **Ken** would like to have a leaflet on the Adopt a Tree so that they can be given out when we have the community forums in January.

Shannon spoke to remind us that we wanted to have all the trees that pull out can be processed by “Wood For Good” and be donated to Vermont heating assistance program. Betsy would like to be sure that when we are pulling the trees one of us from CTC should be present to assess for homeowners that could be entered into the “Adopt a Tree’ Program

B. Water Quality Projects

Erin is point on this. We need to check on her availability as she has not been able to and there are a few things coming up. I will add this to our meeting notes as she did she did send them , unknown to us at the time of the meeting.

My quick water quality summary is that there are projects coming down the pipeline to towns through Act 76, Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) and also through the Flood Resilient Communities Fund. I spoke to Darren in October about potential projects that we could research and decide if we wanted to pursue. I still need to reach out to Annie and Stephanie (?) re: water quality and stormwater projects in Essex. I'll see Annie on Thursday at a CWSP meeting and can provide more feedback in January 2023.

Agenda Item 7. Committee member comments

Betsy that Patrick Kitchen for “Bee the Change” contacted her saying that the pollinator project is on track to be started in the spring. And she would like to know if we are still planning to have benches along trails. We had wanted to do this at the beginning of the year. We need to check in with the fellow in Winooski that makes them. **Kent** was in favor of this

Mike wanted to get ahead of the game and remind us at the next meeting we need to start to planning for our **Spring Clean Up**

Agenda Item 8. Executive Session

Alan “I move that the Conservation and Trails Committee enter executive session to discuss the negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(2) [and to include the Town Planner and Community Development Officer].” This was seconded by Ken vote 7/0. After a lengthily discussion, a decision for No action will be taken at this time. 7/0

Lauren made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 Seconded by Shannon vote 7/0 The meeting was adjourned

Of special note a thanks to Shannon for the holiday cookies