

MIDDLESEX CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Thursday, October 6, 2016
7:00 p.m.
Middlesex Town Offices
Middlesex, VT

Minutes

Commissioners Present: Dick Alderman, Larry Becker, Seth Coffey (via phone), Heather Katz, George Longenecker, Lee Rosberg, Dave Shepard

Commissioner's Absent: Charlie Merriman

Town Forest Stewardship Subcommittee: Steve Juiffre, Bryan Redmond

Guest: Mitch Osiecki – Middlesex Recreation Director

1. Administrative Operations

a. Approve minutes of September 1st meeting: Heather noted the following corrections to the treasurers report portion of the draft minutes of the September 1st meeting:

- Heather was in contact with Patty Lewis, town bookkeeper and not Cindy Carlson, town treasurer.
- Replace the term “fiscal 2016 budget” with “account balance”.
- Heather will check with Cindy and Patty about the Conservation Fund balance.

Heather motioned to approve the minutes of the September 1st Middlesex Conservation Commission (MCC) meeting, as amended, seconded by Larry. The amended minutes were approved unanimously.

b. Treasurer's report: Heather stated she will need more time to decipher the budget reports she received and will report at the November meeting. Lee noted that the expense for disposal of the trash collected from the Winooski River on the clean-up day came to \$49 for 0.3 tons.

c. Correspondence

- The MCC received an email from a California resident who was visiting Vermont expressing concern about the potential demolition of the Middlesex train station. Sticks and Stuff, who have been renting the structure for storage, have no need of the building and don't want to continue to pay the rental fee to the railroad. It is possible that if there is no renter for the building the railroad may want it torn down.
- A letter was received from the Vermont Woodlands Association notifying of a database that the MCC has access to.
- The newsletter of the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions.

2. Project Reports

a. Middlesex Town Forest (MTF)

Seth made some minor adjustments to the flagline of the hiking trail on his September 2nd outing and one more significant alteration by using a climbing turn to eliminate a number of switchbacks. The next work trip on the trail will be to review these latest changes and the final portion of the current flagline that Seth didn't get to on his last hike. Lee noted the open area

where the current flagline ends appears to be a sensitive area that may be degraded by foot traffic and may need a closer look to determine if there are any rare species. Bob Popp from Marshfield who visited the MTF in April with others from Marshfield was mentioned as an expert who might be able to assess this area. Dave suggested during the next hike to continue to the summit of Chase's Mountain to assess it as a potential destination that might be less fragile. Seth also mentioned the possibility of conflicts between wildlife corridors and the trail location. Bryan noted that the amount of use is the main factor in potential disturbance of wildlife and we don't anticipate heavy use of this trail. The next field day was scheduled for Saturday, October 29th at 9:00.

With the addition of the Steed property to the MTF the sign identifying the MTF, that has been located near the former corner of the MTF property, could be moved to the better access path that leads into the MTF past the cabins. Dave noted the only potential downside would be to draw more attention to the cabin. On balance moving the sign seemed to make sense so that will be done, possibly as part of the field day on October 29th.

Dave presented a draft version of interim trail standards to guide trail work on the MTF. Discussion included tread width and overall brush clearing width. Since no actual trail cutting will take place until at least next spring there isn't an immediate need to approve the standards. They will be discussed further at the November meeting with a goal of finalizing before next spring.

Lee will try to obtain a key for the cabin before the October 29th hike so that as part of that event participants can assess the condition of the cabin. Potential uses for the cabin were noted, including storage of trail tools and renting it out for overnight use to make it available and create some income that could be used to maintain the cabin and support the MTF. Seth noted a composting outhouse would be a good future addition.

The status of the boundary survey was discussed. We weren't sure if there is still a map expected from Mike Patterson and his company that would summarize the current status. Walking the boundaries that Mike previously flagged to replace flagging that is likely deteriorating would be a useful task. Paid professional help will likely be necessary to complete an official survey. Possible funding sources could include the Conservation Fund and proceeds from logging. It might be necessary to approach the Select Board about funding that could be paid back from logging income.

The MTF Management Plan was discussed with regard to completing the update focusing on timber management. Lee noted he would like to see a requirement for logging to be done only in the winter. Seth mentioned the wildlife habitat management aspect of timber harvesting and how there are potential grants for this from wildlife organizations.

b. Shady Rill Park

The Town will assume management on a one year trial basis for 2017 and is looking for budget numbers. Mike Fraysier from the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation may be able to attend the November meeting to discuss this issue. Beyond basic operation and maintenance

there is the potential to do riparian restoration on the property. The Friends of the Winooski is putting in a grant application for streambank restoration work and is looking for likely sites.

c. Winooski River Clean-up Day

Lee reported that the clean-up day in Middlesex had 13 or 14 volunteers who filled three canoes with trash from the river that amounted to 0.3 tons as referenced under the budget discussion. The haul included a dozen tires including several large tractor tires.

d. Town Forest Visit Exchange with Marshfield

George reported that he and Hope Crifo met with two Marshfield residents for a tour of the Marshfield Stranahan Town Forest. There is a trail system based partly on a Class 4 road and old logging roads but other trails have been constructed. A sugarbush on the property is leased and brings in \$3000 a year in revenue.

e. Three Mile Bridge Parcel

The interim management plan needs to be reviewed and potentially revised. A public meeting needs to be conducted to seek input on the future of the parcel. The Friends of the Winooski can assist with any streambank restoration and replanting.

3. New/Other Business

Dick mentioned that the Select Board has made some changes to the proposed zoning regulation based on public comments received. They will hold a hearing on October 25th.

Meeting adjourned at 9:07

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard, Secretary