

MIDDLESEX CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Thursday, November 1, 2018
7:00 p.m.
Middlesex Town Office
Middlesex, VT

Minutes

Commissioners Present: Dick Alderman, Sorsha Anderson, Ross Lieblappen, George Longenecker, Dell McDonough, Lee Rosberg, Dave Shepard
Guests: Mitch Osiecki – Middlesex Recreation Director/Planning Commission Member, Collin O’Neal – Manager, Wrightsville Beach Recreation Area

1. Administrative Operations

a. Meeting Minutes from September 6th and October 3rd

Lee made a motion to approve the minutes of the Middlesex Conservation Commission (MCC) September 6th meeting with a second from Ross. A correction was noted for the spelling of Elise Schadler’s last name and Chases Mountain. The minutes were approved with these corrections. Ross moved to approve the October 3rd meeting minutes with a second from Sorsha. The minutes were approved with the same correction for the spelling of Chases Mountain.

b. Treasurer’s Report

Lee stated that the proposed MCC annual operating budget for fiscal 2019 has the same categories as previous budget requests and will be presented at the Select Board meeting on November 10th at 4:00 p.m. George will be attending the meeting and can speak for the MCC budget request. George made a motion to accept the budget request as presented; Sorsha seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Treasurer Heather Katz had emailed the current fund balances prior to the meeting as:

- Operating Budget = \$500.00
- MCC Special Project Fund = \$864.72
- Conservation Fund = \$14,030.40

c. Trust for Public Land Conservation Fund Application

The MCC received an application from the Trust for Public Land (TPL) requesting \$10,000 from the Middlesex Land Conservation Fund to support costs incurred by TPL in purchasing and holding the Hunger Mountain Headwaters property for eventual transfer to the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for addition to the Putnam State Forest. Ross noted that there were some minor differences in the acreage cited for the project within the application. Dell noted that within the description it stated that snowmobiling, horseback riding and mountain biking might be allowed. In further discussion it was noted that future uses of the property would be addressed in the Putnam State Forest management plan and the public would have an opportunity to provide input. George made the following motion: The Middlesex Conservation Commission advises the Town of Middlesex to use \$10,000 from the Conservation Fund to support the Trust for Public Land Hunger Mountain Headwaters Project. Ross seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

d. Middlesex Outstanding Conservationist Award

In order to accommodate Collin O'Neal who was attending the meeting for the discussion of the Shady Rill Park this item was temporarily passed over.

Upon return to this following the Shady Rill Park discussion, three nominations were presented for an Outstanding Middlesex Conservationist Award:

- Seth Coffey for his efforts in laying out and guiding construction of the first hiking trail on the Middlesex Town Forest.
- Talitha Landis-Marinello for maintaining the Rumney School gardens.
- Bill Rossmassler for spearheading the purchase of the additional parcel added to the Town Forest.

It was noted that Bill had been previously recognized for this accomplishment by an earlier Award. Sorsha made a motion to recognize both Talitha and Seth with Outstanding Middlesex Conservationist Awards. Ross seconded the motion. In discussion of the motion it was recommended that the awards include a gift certificate for \$35.00 to Red Hen. Lee moved to add to the motion that the two gifts, totaling \$70.00, come from the MCC operating budget. George seconded the motion and the motion passed to present Outstanding Middlesex Conservationist Awards to both Seth and Talitha with accompanying \$35.00 Red Hen gift certificates.

2. Project Reports

a. Shady Rill Park

Gianna Petito from the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District (WNRCD) sent the MCC the proposed restoration plan for Shady Rill Park. The plan presented three options of increasing scope with a recommendation to implement the middle option. Collin recommended closing off vehicular access to the remainder of the park beyond the proposed reconfigured picnic area as protective of the natural resources of the park and as a means to discourage some of the shady activity that occurs further into the park. George noted a concern about the unsanitary condition of the outhouse the MCC observed in early June at our annual meeting. Collin said the outhouse was improved later in the summer and the Department of Environmental Conservation, who currently own the park, can pay for improvements to the outhouse. As an important component of the plan is to develop several designated accesses to the brook to reduce stream bank erosion, Collin recommended taking a look at a river access that was created on the Dog River in Northfield as a great example. The WNRCD is seeking support for the next grant application to fund a 100% design for this work.

The MCC comments are summarized as follows:

- Road access to the park should terminate as near the picnic area as possible.
- Retain pedestrian access to the "teardrop loop" portion of the current access road.
- Remove one picnic site past the outhouse where there is stream bank erosion.
- The MCC is concerned about the condition of the outhouse.

The MCC is supportive of the WNRCD proceeding with an application for the 100% design for the project.

b. Emerald Ash Borer

Discussion revolved around the tasks needed to move forward with inventorying ash trees along roadsides in Middlesex. There will need to be training for MCC members and others who may

want to work on this project. A protocol will need to be developed for everyone involved to follow. Should the inventory include only ash trees in the town right of way or any ash trees that might fall into the road? The top priorities for assessment are more heavily travelled roads and public spaces. Ross has tried out the App around the VTC campus with students and found it easy to use. To focus on those trees large enough to pose more of a hazard the assessment should include those trees larger than 6 inches in diameter with the trees being tallied into diameter size classes. If assessments are done when the trees are in leaf it can include information about apparent tree health but we could start the assessment anytime and just leave out that component when leaves are not present. The first step is a training with assessors so that everyone is doing the assessing in the same manner. In addition to roads, public spaces that should be a priority for assessment include: Rumney School, Walt Kelly Park, Shady Rill Park. The heavily used portions of Wrightsville Beach Recreation Area would also be on the list – possibly the park staff could do this. A first training session will be held at George's house and along the road nearby on November 10th at 10:00 a.m.

c. Middlesex Town Forest

The trail work day on October 6th resulted in completing clearing of the trail route to the summit of Chases Mountain, enhancing a view of White Rocks Mountain and Mount Hunger and cleaning up the unauthorized clearing of a view toward the east. Paint blazing of the route may need to wait until spring. There will be some heavier trail construction needed so the MCC will likely be applying for a grant to fund a VYCC crew.

Lee suggested a project to gut the inside of the cabin on the MTF along with a good cleaning with bleach.

A winter outing on the MTF was discussed with possibilities being tracking or a snowshoe hike on the new trail.

3. Other Business

A survey request came around on the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions list serve concerning wildlife corridors in town plans. Lee will complete the survey.

Dave noted the list of MCC members on the town website is out of date and will contact the town with an updated list for posting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard, MCC Secretary