

MIDDLESEX CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Thursday, March 9, 2023 at 7:00
Meeting Conducted in Person and Via Zoom

Minutes

Commissioners Present: Ross Lieblappen, Adrienne Magida, Lee Rosberg, Dave Shepard and Jon Udis

Guests: Robert Nelson (Washington County Forester – Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation) and Sandy Levine (Planning Commission)

1. Administrative Operations

a. Minutes of February 2, 2023 Meeting

Minutes of the February 2, 2023 meeting of the Middlesex Conservation Commission (MCC) were reviewed. Jon made a motion to approve the minutes with a second from Lee, the minutes were approved.

b. Treasurer's Report

There were no financial updates.

c. Correspondence

Sandy Levine with the Planning Commission (PC) presented information on their project relating to a natural resources inventory for the town to be included in a future town plan. The PC has contracted with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) to carry out the mapping. CVRPC is interested in using Middlesex as a model for this type of assessment. The effort will include outreach to town residents. The PC anticipates a public meeting in April to introduce this project to town residents. Robert recommended contacting Vermont Conservation Design as part of this project as they have statewide data on a landscape scale.

2. Project Reports (point person shown in parentheses)

a. Middlesex Town Forest (Dave and Ross)

Robert attended the meeting to report on his assessment of the timber resources on the Middlesex Town Forest (MTF). There is wood ready for harvesting on the MTF; the opportunity for harvesting is in stands #3 and #5. These stands comprise about 250 acres of which 150 to 200 acres would be suitable for some level of harvesting. He recommended all areas harvested be to the east of the Chases Mountain Trail. Access to the timber could be along the old woods road that starts at the information kiosk. Ross mentioned that the town has had discussions with adjoining land owner Anne Villeneuve about access using some of the roads on her property with logs going out to the town gravel pit. Robert stated that the existing timber management plan included in the MTF Management Plan is still relevant. Openings for early successional forest songbirds would be included in harvest recommendations. Lee suggested updating the MTF Management Plan before proceeding with any timber harvesting.

Robert noted there are some impediments to logging on the MTF including: steep terrain, drainage areas and access. These impediments would likely make a harvest more suitable to a larger operator. Lee mentioned access through the Villeneuve property would alleviate some of the access obstacles. Robert thought potential revenue from a timber harvest could be in the range of \$30,000 to \$60,000 and recommended the proceeds going the Middlesex Conservation Fund. Ash would be a significant component of a harvest so the threat from the emerald ash borer needs to be taken into account. There is also paper birch that is nearing the end of its' lifespan and would likely need to be harvested within about five years. Overall site quality on the MTF is average with areas of thin soils. Much of the understory is currently diseased beech and the forest could trend toward diseased beech in the future. He noted that timber harvesting plans would need to be reviewed by the Vermont Land Trust due to the easement they hold.

Robert would like the MCC to determine if the plan update is a prerequisite to a harvest; he could potentially assist with an update but he does have ongoing commitments to some other towns for their town forests.

b. Trails Committee (Adrienne, Dave, George, and/or Jon)

Adrienne reported on a scouting excursion on the MTF looking at the potential for a shorter loop utilizing the path that passes by the cabins and then finding a route to connect into the lower end of the Chases Mountain Trail. A potential route was located and a GPS track has been mapped.

3. New/Other Business

Jon heard back from Kate Alberghini, the statewide Green Up Coordinator, who put him in touch with Casella Waste Management. The cost for a dumpster would be \$110 for delivery, \$195 for pickup and \$125/ton for disposal exclusive of tires. The town has typically paid the disposal cost in the past. Kingsbury can make a truck available on Green Up Day that could be positioned at one or two areas with lots of trash to pick up such as the Park & Ride and the boat launch area at Wrightsville Reservoir.

Town Clerk Sarah Merriman had inquired about which MCC members are up for reappointment. Minutes of MCC meetings or the Town Report were suggested as places to look and the MCC will check into this.

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard, MCC Secretary