**STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

December 4, 2018

MINUTES

Present at the Morrill Education Building at 7 p.m. were Commission members: Steve Faccio, Kate Root, Micki Colbeck, Mike Hebb, Jared Jenisch and Steve Willbanks, Chair.

* Minutes from the October 23rd, ’18 meeting were approved.
* The featured guest, Kiley Briggs, was unable to attend and will re-schedule his presentation on woodland turtles.
* Steve Faccio noted that Strafford resident and avid bird enthusiast, Anne Aversa, had died recently, and had left a donation for the Center for Ecostudies, He asked the SCC to consider commemorating her with an appropriate memorial here in Strafford. Various ideas were suggested. Action on the matter was deferred to a future meeting.
* Micki reported on a presentation she attended on forest resiliency. Best farming and forestry practices can accomplish a lot. Current thinking is that conserving larger geographic or geophysical landscapes may be preferable to identifying numerous intact ecosystems. The priority would be to maintain these larger tracts to promote diversity. Allowing forested lands and overgrown stream and road margins to complete their life-cycles without human intervention would be one example. It was noted that the greatest impact from climate change on Vermont is likely to be the incursion of more people who are leaving areas, such as the West and Southwest affected by drought and heat spells or coastal areas affected by rising sea levels.
* David Paganelli toured the Town Forest with Mike Hebb and suggested improvements for managing it as a recreational and sustainable forestry resource, including periodic timber harvests, invasive plant removal and the further recommendation that the Town create a stewardship fund to manage routine and on-going maintenance more efficiently. His recommendations have been incorporated in the draft Town Forest Management Plan.
* Steve Willbanks reported that the Selectboard had discussed the Whitcomb Hill Management Plan, which had been submitted to them. They were generally supportive, but had a couple of quibbles. They noted that since it was indicated in the MP that it should be reviewed and/or revised at least every ten years, they wondered if it should include the names of specific individuals, such as the County Forester or the Trail Manager, since there might be turnover in those positions. The feeling on the SCC is that the MP is dynamic document and should be amended as necessary, rather a very formal document like a Town policy. The ten-year review is more of a reminder that it shouldn’t be allowed to become out-of-date or obsolete. Also, if a specific individual has a written document or report relevant to the MP, then identifying that individual would make sense. Steve will relay this response to the Selectboard.
* Steve W. also reported on the first meeting of the Ashley Community Forest Working Group on 11/29/’18. The SCC’s representatives, David Paganelli and J.T. Horn, along with Steve as alternate, were present and met with Michael Sacca of the Alliance for Vermont Communities and Bob Linck of the Vermont Land Trust, but there was only one representative from Sharon in attendance, Dick Ruben, which was a concern. Michael will try to make sure Sharon is fully represented in the future. There was further discussion about governance and managing the property cooperatively with Sharon. J.T. volunteered to draft a Memorandum of Understanding and the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 3rd, upstairs in the Strafford Municipal Building.

Respectfully submitted.

Stephen Willbanks, Clerk pro tem.,

Working from Jared Jenisch’s Meeting Notes