

STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

April 25, 2017

MINUTES

Present at the Morrill Education Building at 7 p.m. were commission members: Steve Willbanks, Steve Faccio., Chuck Sherman, Mike Hebb, Kate Root, and Jared Jenisch

- Minutes of 3/28/17 SCC meeting approved
- Election of officers: Chair, Steve Willbanks; Vice Chair, Kate Root; Clerk, Jared Jenisch
- Upcoming events
 - Mike: dates of orchid walks are dependent on progress of plant growth. There will be a National Trail Day hike on June 3 that will traverse the Cross Town Trail south to north
 - Steve proposed that we look into the possibility of Dave Paganelli offering another tour of his land
 - Possible upcoming speakers: Mike Hillinger, chair of the Upper Valley Sierra Club; Gus Speth; would Steve Faccio be interested, or know someone who might be?
- Wetlands Update: Kate and Jared will be meeting in a week to generate a list of wetlands for the coming year and a list of initial dates; first visits will depend on plant growth
- Trails Update: Nothing new; Mike will encourage trail maintenance volunteers to get on top of lapsed trail maintenance
- John Hemenway Memorial: a committee was formed consisting of Kate, Steve W., Steve F. and Jared, to look into possibilities, including near the cemetery behind the Town House and in Taylor Valley; Kate walked with Paul Harwood to the old mill site, which was beautiful--Paul thought you could make a two-car pull-off there, and there is a good flat area by the river for a bench or picnic table; Kate will suggest a few dates for walks to these locations
- The Coffin family heirs are thinking about what to do with the property; there is an easement on part of the Coffin property along the river, but there is concern that someone could develop the land on the hillside overlooking the upper village. The Historical Society has been asked to commission an appraisal in the hope that the results might persuade the Coffin family to allow the existing easement to be extended to protect that side of the valley. It was agreed that the SCC would send a letter in support of this request to the Coffin family.
- Steve noted that there is nothing in Strafford zoning laws to protect the historic nature of the upper village; many properties there are for sale or soon may be and there is a concern that if a large number of properties change hands and new owners alter them, it could change the look of the village. There is a certified local government program, utilized in Norwich and elsewhere, that enables towns to create historic preservation committees that are given the opportunity to review projects proposed by property

owners; the committee can't necessarily veto a project, but can negotiate with property owners; and if restoring a property as it is is too expensive for property owners, there are special matching funds available to assist in this. Fourteen towns in Vermont are in this program. The Historical Society and Planning Commission support the idea of enrolling Strafford in this program.

- Next meeting: May 23, 2017

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Jenisch, Recording Secretary

