

Strafford Conservation Commission  
1/28/20

Present: Steve Willbanks, Mike Hebb, Kate Root, Micki Colbeck, Steve Faccio, Jared Jenisch, Chuck Sherman; guest Michael Sacca of the Alliance for Vermont Communities

Steve: Michael will update us on plans for going forward with the Ashley Community Forest project. The Selectboard has asked that it be delayed until after Town Meeting.

Michael:

- Sharon and Strafford would own 256 acres. Two people from each town would serve as the management committee: they would choose a 5th person.
- Interlocal agreement: towns agree to work together and own it together.
- Conservation Easement: Vermont Land Trust (VLT) has drafted one in conjunction with the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board.
- Management Plan: being developed.
- Forestry Plan: submitted application to Current Use; enrolled as of April 1st; Dave Paganelli prepared the forestry plan free of charge.
- There would be a loss of \$1100 per year in municipal tax; school tax would remain unchanged. Enrolled in Current Use, the taxes for both towns together would be \$800.
- The Land Trust has developed a summary of the 16-page conservation easement to distribute.
- Surveyed parcel doesn't exactly match current tax map parcels.
- In Sharon, a deeded 50-foot right-of-way to the Ashley property was found on Deb Fisk's land.
- There are trails in the works, including a connection to the Manning Trail
- The Four-Town Project: one committee is devoted to working lands and includes a trails committee; there are already 10 people from the four towns who have volunteered to help with the trails.
- A graveled bike trail is in the works as well.
- There are plans to schedule special town meetings in Strafford and Sharon in May to vote on the project.
- If the towns vote it down, the Alliance of Vermont Communities (AVC) could continue to own it in current use; or it could go to some other non-profit organization. AVC doesn't want to be an owner of the land.

Minutes: approved

- Trails and Cobb Town Forest: Mike reports that a new trail is in the works and permission has been granted by all necessary landowners. It will extend from the Strafford Cemetery behind the Town House to Orchard Road in Sharon. It will increase the mileage in our trail system by 25 percent and likely be called the White Rock Trail.
- Mike also spent an afternoon with Tim Appleton, who has taken over the management of Podunk Wildlife Management Area from John Buck. He had been concerned about the

SCC mowing there, but has now given his consent. The Fish & Wildlife Division of ANR plans to construct a new trailhead and kiosk with parking on the west side of Podunk, similar to the one on the east side of the WMA. They'll put it across from the log landing above the pond. He would like the Town to keep this upper section of Pennock Road passable.

- Earlier in the day Mike had explored the portion of the town forest on opposite side of Hemenway Road from the Cobb Trailhead to scope out the potential for a trail there.
- He raised the question of whether we need to create more trails. More trails means more and more maintenance?

Natural Resource Inventory (NRI): Micki estimated the cost, based on figures she got from Jesse Moore of Native Geographic, to be about \$7K. This would be just for Phase 1; Phase 2 involves more community involvement, vernal pool mapping, etc. and therefore more cost. Objective: find what you have in order to conserve it.

Ash Tree Removal Project: Bob and Carole Wilson did an excellent and thorough inventory of ash trees in the Town highway rights-of-way, but David Paganelli, who has been in contact with them, reported that he had the impression they didn't plan to be involved further. It was noted by Steve that the Selectboard put 5K in the '20 highway budget, so apparently there is now money to start the removal.

Next meeting: February 25th.

The motion to adjourn carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jared Jenisch, Recording Secretary