

STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

April 24, 2018

MINUTES

Present at the Morrill Education Building at 7 p.m. were commission members: Dave Paganelli, J.T. Horne, Micki Colbeck, Mike Hebb, Chuck Sherman, Jared Jenisch, and Steve Willbanks, Chair.

- **Minutes** from last meeting were voted on and accepted
- **SCC positions:** The motion was made, and carried, to re-elect for the new year those currently holding SCC positions: Steve Willbanks as Chair, Kate Root as Vice Chair, and Jared Jenisch as Recording Secretary
- **Special Spaces in Strafford map:** Steve W. removed lower priority connectivity areas so that the entire map is not marked. Extensive discussion of this map and the Wind Energy and Solar Energy Maps followed. The Energy Committee is looking for places to affirmatively mark as better for wind and solar energy so that the town has some say when an energy company approaches the town for development. JT asked whether this is contrary to the SCC's mission, which has always been to affirmatively designate (environmentally, historically, aesthetically, or agriculturally) desirable areas in Strafford for protection, rather than affirmatively designating areas for (energy) development. Dave noted that there are certain values in town we don't want to disrupt: prime agricultural soil, blocks of forest, historical villages; the town is not going to put solar or wind installations in these areas: or in wetlands, or easements, or river corridors. We should eliminate those areas from the prime solar/wind areas on the energy maps. Others noted additional reasons for protection: viewsapes, natural communities, deer yards, bear territory, etc. It was noted that visually it is difficult to depict all these layers on a map without it becoming visually incoherent. Ideally, we would get all these layers from Pete Fellows or elsewhere and be able to look at them all digitally, adding and removing them at will. Steve will contact Pete Fellows about this, and about the possibility of remapping the energy areas in such a way to exclude areas we would like to see protected. Possibly Micki could work with Pete Fellowes on this as a mapping project.
- **Open Space Plan and Town Plan:** Steve noted we still need to work on bringing the "places of interest" lists in these plans into closer agreement so as to strengthen the town's designation of areas that are deserving of protection
- **Trails/Town Forest:** The EPA will have a few miles of trail blocked for a few months near the mines as they begin the process of filling in the South Open Cut. Mike will start

repainting blazes soon. Discussion of a trail along the powerlines in town: Mike talked to Gary Kendall about the section for O'Dell Road to Carpenter Road--this would be problematic because the trail would go through a pasture with bulls. There was then discussion of the possibility of a new trail between the villages along the river. It was pointed out that this would be an excellent outreach program for the SCC as such a trail would be heavily used by joggers and walkers, as well as kids traveling between the villages who otherwise might be on Justin Morrill, which is a dangerous road to walk on.

- **Wetlands:** Kate and Jared's next meeting will be to confirm the list of community volunteers for this season and begin planning wetland visits. Micki offered to join the wetland effort.
- **SCC Archive:** Steve W. raised the question whether digital documents should be centrally stored, for the wetland projects as well as other documents. Wetland documents are currently stored in a private Google Drive account in a way that makes them accessible to all members involved in the project. Jared agreed that these documents should be held in a way not attached to any individual SCC member. Steve W. noted that the town clerk could possibly upload documents to the SCC page on the town website. Jared will look into the options.
- **Emerald Ash Borer:** Dave will offer a presentation on this incursion that will be open to the public at the Morrill Homestead. Ash constitutes 5 percent of Vermont forests; closer to 7 percent in Strafford. Dave will present on the Emerald Ash Borer at the next SCC meeting, on May 22nd.
- **Paul Gillies:** Mike attended a workshop by Paul Gillies. The Historical Society is interested in co-sponsoring one of his talks on ancient roads and local Vermont history. Mike will contact him about possible Sunday dates.
- **The Hemenway bench** has been ordered.
- **Next meeting:** May 22nd

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Jenisch