

## STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

November 28, 2017

### MINUTES

Present at the Morrill Education Building at 7 p.m. were commission members: Kate Root, Jared Jenisch, J. T. Horn, Dave Paganelli, and Steve Willbanks, Chair.

- **The John Hemenway Memorial Bench:** At this point the installation of the bench will wait until spring; there will be about a two-week lead time in ordering it. It was agreed that a note about it will be put in the town report. There was some discussion of what the dedication ceremony might entail.
- **Trails:** Mike met with the Selectboard regarding the Whitcomb Hill trail; he would like to make Whitcomb Hill accessible to as many people as possible, including providing transport at predetermined times; to that end the trail should be improved where it crosses town land; ideally the town would create a small parking area at the end of the town-owned class four road and make clear that no vehicles were allowed beyond; the Selectboard seemed amenable to these ideas. There was discussion of the risk of damage to the road—could or should it be gated?
- **Budget request:** Last year the SCC requested \$1500 for the maintenance of Old City Falls; Steve asked Tim McCormick if further repairs are needed currently, but hasn't yet heard back; Steve will talk to Tim and make a request of the town accordingly.
- **Town Plan:** The new Town Plan was approved by the Selectboard, doubling the size of village centers. The question was raised as to whether the new Town Plan sufficiently protects our more remote areas. The Open Space Plan, referenced in the Town Plan, goes back to 2009; the most recent version should be edited and the SCC should have it updated and approved for future reference. It was asked whether the Open Space Plan was adequately addressed in the Town Plan, especially given that there is some overlap in content with the Town Plan. The Open Space Plan is a non-regulatory tool, but it could influence zoning changes. At the time it was written, the SCC thought that there should be more effort made to protect the remote areas in Strafford, not just a general principle to conserve rural character and viewscapes. While the Planning Commission may have acknowledged certain concerns identified by the Open Space Plan, it ended up being a more general document than the SCC may have wanted.
- **J.T.'s Response to the Town Plan:** Though the SCC is voluntary and aspirational, while the Planning Commission is regulatory, still the Open Space Plan has some standing as it is included by reference in the Town Plan. Much agricultural land is best protected by zoning; the SCC might have an opinion for the Planning Commission for how to sync Open Space Plan principles with zoning laws. There is much language in the Town Plan about all the things a SCC would care about—but mapping would show where it is specifically. J.T. will propose some action items for what needs to happen to update the Open Space Plan; by the next meeting he will inventory the work we need to

do, perhaps a half dozen tasks we can assign among us or submit to the Regional Planning Commission.

- SCC members should read through the relevant two chapters of the new Town Plan, as well as the current version of the Open Space Plan, for the next meeting.
- Next meeting: January 23, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jared Jenisch