

STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes 24 February 2015

Present at the Morrill Education Building at 7:00 p.m., were commission members Steve Willbanks (Chair), Tii McLane, Jared Jenisch, J.T. Horn, Kate Root and Amy Metz. Guest speaker Peter Hayden.

Mike Hebb,

1. 03 December 2014 meeting minutes approved
2. Project Status:
 - a. Maple Hill Culvert –
 - i. Milone and MacBroom Engineering Design completed in the Fall - Invoice \$4500 paid on Feb 10. SCC covered 35% of costs from Phase 3 MEF Grant.
 - ii. Projected Cost to replace Culvert from Engineering Design - 140K - 190K
 - iii. CT River Watershed Council (CRWC, Ron Rhodes) received an MEF grant for 100K-125K. Trying to secure additional sources of funding via VT Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife.
 - iv. CRWC to complete RFP for Contractors to bid on the project by close of business Thur Feb 26. Ron asked if there were any preferred contractors. Amy will reach out Brent or Jon Mackinnon to see if there are any contractors in mind.
 - v. Culvert replacement anticipated this Summer 2015. Replacing existing culvert with a larger bottomless arch culvert.
 - b. Invasive Removal – Taylor Valley Road

Looking for a joint mitigation effort between the Conservation Commission and the Taylor Valley Association. Private landowners could get NRCS funding to help pull/remove the invasives but we do not know of any landowners who have requested such grants and in any case it is not likely NRCS is funding these types of projects. Another suggestion is to investigate the Grassroots funding. Tii will research funding sources to see if we can get a project started for the Summer. We think it would estimate about 5-10K but Tii will talk with Redstart to get a better estimate. Tii will also reach out to Paul Harwood and inventory a list of landowners that would be affected.
 - c. Wetlands Inventory and Town Invasive project are both in hibernation but will ramp back up in the Spring

3. New/Other Business:
 - a. Open SCC Positions – We have two open positions and have two candidates that are interested. A motion was raised, second and a vote passed to offer the positions to these two candidates. We will present their names to the Select Board.
 - b. By-laws – Voting at the next meeting. Steve will
 - c. VT Conservation Commission Dues due July 1
 - d. Sylvia Conte Wildlife Refuge (7mil acres) Management Plan – Will designate new focus areas in the Management Plan and selecting areas with ecological integrity. Out of the new Management Plan there are two areas for the Federal Government to play: 1.) Land Acquisition Areas (i.e. Fed government would purchase land) and 2.) Partnership Areas (i.e. the Federal Gov't would provide expertise or fund management costs.)
4. Guest Speaker: Peter Hayden reporting on the Taylor Valley Conservation Project
 - a. Made up of a group of Taylor Valley residents that started a board about 8 years ago.
 - b. Goal is to conserve as much of Taylor Valley as possible.
 - c. Educate other Taylor Valley landowners regarding conservation easements. Pair up interested landowners with the right land trusts.
 - d. Through funds raised, the Taylor Valley board is able to cover the transaction costs to conserve the land. This places the burden off of the landowner.
 - e. Stats on the project
 - i. 18K acres in the subject area.
 - ii. 2300ac. conserved going into the project (John Heminway's land) and an additional 900 ac. conserved since the project was started.
 - iii. 2200 ac where landowners are committed to conserving and 3200 ac where the landowners are considering to ease.
 - iv. Possible total acres under easement is 8600ac (45% of the subject area).
 - v. Average parcel size in the subject area is 150ac.
 - f. RedStart is an informal contractor that helps with the project but they do not sit on the board.
 - g. Taylor Valley Conservation Project is looking for help getting connected to Strafford landowners in the subject area.
5. Announcements:
 - a. Upper Valley Land Trust Conservation Commissions Meeting Thursday February 26.

Next meeting: March 24, 2015

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Metz, Recording Secretary