

STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

July 24, 2018

MINUTES

Present at the Morrill Education Building at 7:30 p.m. were commission members: Kate Root, Micki Colbeck, Dave Paganelli, Steve Faccio, Jared Jenisch, and Steve Willbanks, Chair. Also present were Alex Buskey and Michael Sacca from Alliance of Vermont Communities.

- Alex and Michael presented an account of the progress that the AVC has made toward the acquisition of the Ashley property, which is just south of the Manning property, and spans both Strafford and Sharon. The hope is to create an “Ashley Community Forest” that will be maintained by both towns, with access for walking and other recreational use. The property already has many trails. Maintenance cost for both towns would be offset by logging revenues. The AVC has raised a significant sum of money and the Upper Valley Land Trust closed the gap. Now they will take it to the public in both towns, looking for donors and support for the project.

Meeting

- **Minutes:** approval of June 26, 2018 Draft Minutes: motion to accept, motion carries.
- **Old City Falls:** Tim McCormick has asked whether the septic tank at the Old City Falls outhouse has ever been emptied; no one knows that it has. The question was also raised of the potential impact of beavers and a beaver dam on private property upstream from the Falls.
- **Whitcomb Hill Trail.** There has been serious vandalism on the properties along the road: a cottage was cleaned out, gardens were driven through. The Selectboard could reclassify the road as a town trail and retain the the right of way; install a gate for which the property owners and the town would have the key, so that there would be no access for motorized vehicles for the public; they probably won't do this because they would have to reclassify the road and this doesn't happen often. Alternately, the Selectboard might agree to gate the road just during mud season to minimize damage to road. Discussion ensued as to whether the Town has an obligation to maintain a road when it owns the right of way; and if not, whether the road should be thrown up. Dave cited instances of landowners being terrorized by mud trucks on class four roads in other towns.
- **Open Space Map:** Micki presented her progress on the Open Space Map. She is trying to map only the highest priority areas, because including a layer for

everything we'd like to see protected would "protect" everything, which is not useful. Micki will add a key for every layer. It was reiterated that according to Act 174, towns have a voice as to where energy projects can be installed if they do the groundwork ahead of time and identify locations suitable for sustainable energy infrastructure.

- **The Trans-Village Trail:** Steve W. shared a parcel map of a possible power line route for a trail between the two villages. The merits and disadvantages of a trail that is already partially created, but leaves the valley floor and is not accessible to bikes, were discussed.
- **Wetlands:** Kate noted that two wetlands have been visited recently, and remarked on the particular hospitality of the Tillinghast family during that visit. Jared shared the address and password for a new SCC gmail account. The Google Drive for this account will be the repository for all future materials relating to wetland work, as well as any other aspects of SCC work that require a digital home.
- **Next meeting:** August 28th, 2018

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Jenisch