

Strafford Conservation Commission  
25 March 2014

Present at meeting : Amy Metz, Tii McLane, Mike Hebb, Jared Jenisch, Matt Perry, John Hemenway, J.T. Horn, Steve Willbanks, Michelle Shane

25 March 2014 Meeting Minutes:

Actions:

- IN PROGRESS *Amy* – *Contact Select board for appointment of Steve Willbanks to SCC.* This was done but Brent Cadwell has not yet responded. Amy will follow up
- IN PROGRESS *Tii/Mike/Jared* – *Meet to align on Wetlands Inventory actions for request of funding.* This group met to discuss project. It was decided that Tii would call Michael Lew-Smith of Arrowwood Environmental, and Kevin Peterson from NH Charitable (handles MEH funding proposals). This was done and details are below. The group plans to meet again bi-weekly until the project is designed.
- COMPLETE: *Mike speak with Rebecca regarding how she would like SCC to be involved with Ben Kilham talk at the library.* Mike suggested Rebecca speak directly to Amy. Rebecca has not followed up.
- COMPLETE– *Steve, get latest culvert survey from Jon Mackinnon.* Steve forwarded the State culvert web site to Amy and Tii.
- IN PROGRESS–*Tii investigate VTRANS funding for wildlife crossing mapping.* Tii has emailed a contact at VTRANS and gotten no response. Instead she has been working with intern Michelle Shane on a local roadside tracking project. Michelle reported at this meeting and will provide final report when it is finished.
- IN PROGRESS - *JT - Check with Dave Paganelli regarding Forest Management Plan for Whitcomb Hill. 29 Oct - JT to schedule meeting with Dave.* Email discussion ongoing.
- NEW: Amy and Tii will follow up with Ron Rhodes about the status of landowner applications and funding sources for a culvert replacement.
- NEW: Amy or Tii will find out deadline for Better Back Roads VT.
- NEW: Amy will attend the next Selectboard meeting to discuss the culvert replacement project.
- NEW: Tii will invite Craig Layne to present information on roadside cameras at the next meeting
- NEW: Mike will follow up with Steve Faccio to see if he can come to the next meeting, and if not, would he provide us with commentary or questions to guide us in our meeting with Craig.
- NEW: Tii will tell Town Clerk that Matt is the new treasurer.
- NEW: J.T. and Steve will follow up on ideas for the creation of SCC by-laws.

Discussions:

- Presentation by Michelle Shane, Intern from VCC. Michelle has been working with Tii on a joint Linking Lands Alliance-Strafford Town project to track wildlife crossings of Route 132

from the Thetford-Strafford Town line to the village of South Strafford. She and Tii co-presented the project purpose and results so far. Michelle has created maps of crossings and entered data into a database. When she has completed the project she will give us a copy of the report. Tii will continue to hold data and maps. We can continue to add data over the years as we have people-power to do surveys. Amy suggested it would be good to have GIS shape files of the data. Currently this is not how the data is collected because in the development of the protocol, that is used by other groups as well, it was decided that requiring equipment that not everybody has would be detrimental to the spirit of collecting as much data as possible. The data as we currently have it could be turned into a GIS shape file without too much difficulty. More discussion of how to use the data ensued. Meeting with landowners and providing the information to the planning commission were both suggested. This subject will be further explored when we have a data set in hand.

We reviewed the LLA maps again (we have done so before, but Jared had not seen them before). Looking at the community values maps, J.T. says he was involved in a similar project in NH. Turned out community values matched ecological values. Tii cautioned that this map is very preliminary and only really gives us an idea of what could be done with a town-wide survey of values.

Mike reminded us that Michelle's tracking only gives us a sense of how animals move in the winter. Tii asked if she could invite Craig Layne from Norwich to come present his results with using cameras in Norwich to evaluate road crossing sites. Mike will follow up with Steve Faccio, who had helpful comments re using cameras. If Steve can't come to the meeting, Mike will collect questions, comments from him to help us with questions for Craig.

- Maple Hill Road Culvert Project – This project has 3 components which are currently at the following stages:
  - 1.) Riparian plantings/Livestock exclusion/Alternate water source for landowners This involved the landowners applying to NRCS by the March 21<sup>st</sup> deadline. Ron Rhodes was contacting landowners and we currently don't know if any of them got their applications in.
  - 2.) Culvert Replacement: Funding sources for this project is still be investigated. Ron Rhodes is helping orchestrate that. Funding suggestions were Better Back roads (which will only fund ~10K) and USFWS (possibly funding the rest). Need to find out deadline for Better Back Roads VT. Could only find the 2013 application on the internet.
  - 3.) Dry Hydrant replacement: It has been decided that this is a good idea regardless of whether the culvert gets replaced this year, as the current hydrant is not working. Dave Kendall of the fire department and Troy Dare, the dry-hydrant guru, are handling this. The plan is to move it to Miller Pond. They have been in contact with Fish and Wildlife.
- Open Space Plan Projects – Wetlands Inventory: Tii spoke again with Kevin Peterson. He suggests that writing the full proposal (i.e. \$10-12,000) is a reasonable way to go and that we might get offered a portion of that. If the town could provide some matching value, that would help (he suggested \$4,500 of a \$12,000 project as an example). Possibly matching funds could be found elsewhere, and/or the same proposal could be used to apply for other

funding sources. The initial cover-letter of request for MEH is due in November. Tii spoke with Michael Lew-Smith of Arrowwood. He seemed to think that a wetlands inventory for Strafford would be in the same ballpark for cost as the one done for Thetford. He suggested he would be willing to collaborate with us if we had an idea of how to use his services for part, but not all, of the project. He said that it is the stereoscopic work and the remote assessment of wetland communities that he would feel most uncomfortable handing off to another party to complete. Mike, Jared, and Tii plan to meet again at regular intervals until a project design and a strategy for finding funding is put together.

- Trails – No new updates. Not much traffic but mostly due to the amount of snow cover.
- Old City Falls Update –Rhett Emerson has completed the work to fabricate the metal hood. Come sprint, Matt and Rhett will install the hood.
- TRORC Grant from USFS State and Private Forestry – Pete Fellow (TRORC) and Amy Metz were to attend Taylor Valley Initiative meeting but it was canceled. They will attend meeting on April 7th. Mike suggests we should ask for funding from them towards a wetlands inventory. JT says he feels that the Taylor Valley project is the best place for the TRORC funding.
- Distribution of roles: Tii is handing off the treasurer's role to Matt, and will contact the Town Clerk to that effect. Amy will continue to act as secretary with Tii taking over when Amy is not available. Steve said he would be willing to take on some responsibilities once he is on the SCC. He suggested creating bylaws. He and J.T. will follow up on that idea.
- Invasive Management: Steve asked Tii if any plans are in place. Tii says that she and Janet Cavanaugh have spoken about ideas in the past but haven't had the energy or people-power to make anything concrete happen. Tii has a map of areas of infestation that she will share with Steve. Janet is passionate about combatting invasives in the central valley. Tii is more focused on keeping rural roads clean. Janet has provided information to the road crew relative to a mowing schedule. How much they use the schedule she provided is not clear, but mowing seems to have improved (for invasive management) over the last two years. Tii suggested that Steve might want to work on an invasive-mgmt project when he officially joins the SCC. Further discussion or meetings related to this weren't scheduled.

#### Next Meeting Agenda: 22 April 2014

- Wildlife Road-crossing survey: Tii will report on Michelle's final results. Possible presentation by Craig Layne: Using wildlife cameras to evaluate road crossing areas.
- Maple Hill Road Culvert: new information
- Wetlands Inventory: Project design and funding possibilities
- Trails: any new business
- Old City Falls: any new business
- TRORC USFS Grant: Report of meeting with Taylor Valley group.
- Invasives Management: possible efforts

Tii McLane (SCC member)

<\_\_\_\_\_, Recording Secretary>