

Strafford Conservation Commission
February 26, 2019

Present: Mike Hebb, Kate Root, Dave Paganelli, JT Horn, Micki Colbeck, Jared Jenisch, and Steve Wilbanks, Chair

Prior to the meeting, Kiley Briggs of the Orianne Society gave an engaging presentation on wood turtles and work he has done in the area, Thetford in particular, studying wood turtles.

Minutes from the prior meeting were reviewed, corrected, and accepted.

Ashley Community Forest update: there have been several meetings since the SCC last met. There will be another tomorrow with Dan Grossman who has thoughts on how to manage the property between two towns. A cooperative landfill shared between Bethel and Royalton can provide a model of two towns working together, with one town managing the property. In Sharon there is apparently support for the Ashley community forest from their selectboard, but they are struggling to find people to attend meetings of the Ashley Forest working group. The main focus for now is to publicize the project as we head toward summer by conducting tours to familiarize people with the land and its possibilities. It's important to generate more awareness before voters are asked to accept the gift. The gist of the committee meetings that have occurred so far is that the property will be managed for trails, sustainable forestry, historical preservation, wildlife conservation, and education. While there is no disagreement with regard to this overarching vision, the challenge is how to make it work between two towns.

Four Town Futures discussion: Chuck went to the first meeting, which was in regard to economic vitality, last week. On March 14th there will be a meeting on agriculture and forestry in Tunbridge.

Town meeting: It would be good to have an SCC information table with maps of the Ashley parcel, brochures, etc. The table should be staffed for the afternoon municipal session. Steve will post a notice on the listserv that this information will be available. The emphasis will be less on governance issues and more on what the land has to offer, the history of its purchase, and the uses it can be put to: hiking, education, hunting, etc; and that the Alliance for Vermont Communities is essentially giving it to us. Those at the table can work out who will staff table when; it should be set up during lunch.

Management plans for three main town properties: We accepted the Whitcomb Hill management plan, and reviewed the Old City Falls and Town Forest management plans. Edits to the plans were proposed by Kate, Mike, and Dave. It was suggested that there should be a common standard for all town trails: human powered traffic will be permitted, which includes mountain bikes. Non-human-powered traffic is not permitted. The question was raised as to whether some portion of the timber sale funds should be diverted from the Town House toward the maintenance of trails and land. Should there be a Strafford Town Forest Conservation

Fund? We will need to research wording of the original bequest to see what might be possible, or not. Steve will research and organize possibilities before we make a decision. (Maintenance would include painting boundaries, trail repairs, etc.).

Town website: we need some content related to the SCC. We have some pictures for the Town Forest and the trail system; we need some for Whitcomb Hill and other locations. Micki will share a Story Map with us so we can see what it is; this might be an option.

Wetlands: Kate and Jared have a meeting scheduled for a week from tomorrow to catch up on wetlands and start mapping out the new season.

Informational kiosk: A kiosk in memory of Anne Aversa has been ordered and will be installed at the entrance to the Town Forest trailhead. It is gift from her family through the Vermont Center for Ecostudies.

The next meeting will be on March 26th, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Jenisch