



Brattleboro Planning Services

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TOWN OF BRATTLEBORO CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES July 28, 2020

Conservation Commission Members: Erin Rodgers, Jesse Wagner, and Marilyn Chiarello

Absent: Laurie Callahan

Staff: Andrew Graminski

Guest: Stephen Dotson, Sustainability Coordinator, Oscar Heller, Energy Committee and Gloria Critelli

A. Call to Order

Meeting was opened at 5:17 P.M.

B. Announcements

A. Graminski made an announcement that there are three open seats on the commission. A. Graminski made an announcement for L. Callahan who could not make the meeting that on Friday, July 31, 2020, there will be a Water Chestnut Survey and Harvesting session on the Connecticut River. Those interested should get in touch with Laurie.

C. Approve February 25, March 10 and April 28, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Minutes will be approved at another meeting.

D. New Business

1. Japanese Knotweed Management

a. Gloria Cristelli from Southeastern Watershed Alliance (SeVWA)

Gloria Cristelli of the Southeastern Watershed Alliance spoke to the commission on a method of controlling Japanese knotweed growth using mesh. This method of control is environmentally safe and has been effective in controlling knotweed growth. This type of method is widely used in England. A few commissioners had questions on how this method works? Gloria responded by saying that the plant grows up through the mesh and then gets choked and dies back. Gloria said that while this method of control is effective, it is expensive. Mesh used is usually either 19 gage metal or black plastic. M. Chiarello said they she feels that it would be better for the town to keep doing what it is doing and get more volunteers/pay people, especially youth and those not working to come out 7-9 times a season to control the knotweed growth. Other commissioners showed interest in that approach as well.

b. Report on Whetwoods Wildscaping

A. Graminski provided a summary from L. Callahan on information from Whetwoods Wildscaping:

L. Callahan met with Kim from Whet Woods Wildscaping at the West River Park in June. They talked about their service to use sheep to “graze-down” invasive species, possibly including knotweed. Kim is going to get back to L. Callahan on that possibility. L.

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Callahan also talked with Kim about a possible collaborative approach for the large patch of knotweed at the park along Route 30. Depending on if Kim finds that the sheep will effectively “munch” knotweed, the commission might like to invite her to speak at a meeting this fall.

c. Follow-up from Mike Bald

A. Graminski provided a follow-up email from L. Callahan from Mike Bald on his input regarding controlling knotweed:

L. Callahan emailed Mike Bald about what to do with the older composted knotweed material that the commission has on one of our pallets at the West River Park. He suggested that after one full cycle of drying/freezing/thawing from fall to the next spring was typically enough to kill the knotweed. He said the composted material could be used, but definitely keep it/use it at the site. Even though it is dead/composted it should not be transported to another site.

2. Greenhouse Gas Land Sequestration Discussion with Sustainability Coordinator

S. Dotson, Sustainability Coordinator for the Town of Brattleboro introduced an idea that the Energy Committee has been discussing on potentially measuring how much carbon the Town is off-setting and the potential for both committees to collaborate on this initiative. A similar project has been successfully performed in a town of a similar size in New York State. S. Dotson said that the Conservation Commission could be involved with this project by measuring how much carbon lands in Brattleboro are absorbing. S. Dotson said that this project could be valuable for the town because carbon in Forest and Agricultural lands can make land more valuable if a credit system is formed but that can only happen if carbon is measured for input and output. This system could help incentivize the conservation of more land in Brattleboro.

Conservation members all showed interest in participating in some way with this initiative. E. Roger said that a good way to help get this started would be to do some sort of analysis with GIS data and land use information to get a rough scale of the amount of land the town would measure. M. Chiarello said that it's important that a baseline and where we want to go is established at the start of the project. J. Wagner asked S. Dotson what the ultimate goal of this project is? S. Dotson responded by saying that there are concrete financial benefits from doing this. S. Dotson closed by saying to make this project a reality it needs to be delated to different sections and put off to different groups, the conservation commission being one of them. S. Dotson said he can provide resources and tools and answer questions to help the commission get going. He asked if a Conservation Commissioner could attend an Energy Committee meeting to help with the setting up of the project. Both E. Rogers and J. Wagner showed interest in attending.

3. Organizational Meeting

Moved to next meeting.

4. Site Visits

Commission discussed visiting the Kettle Pond in Wilson Woods in the fall. This is something the commission has been looking to do for while and members felt it should be something that is

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prioritized. The Kettle Pond is listed as a priority site for protection in the Deerfield Valley Basin Plan. Another site discussed was off of Black Mountain Rd, which is less accessible than the Kettle Pond. Will be discussed more at future meetings.

5. West River Park – Dog Waste Issue

L. Callahan and J. Wagner both have seen high amounts of dog feces at West River Park and see it as both a public health issue and water quality issue. A. Graminski brought up the idea of providing dog waste bags and a sign at the park that says for those with dogs to pick up their waste. Commissioners agreed that could potentially be effective. A. Graminski will reach out to Rec and Park about partnering with them on implementing such a measure. J. Wagner show interest in building something that could house both the sign and the dog waste bags. A. Graminski will report back at the August meeting.

E. Old Business

1. West River Park – Japanese Knotweed Clean-Up

Commissioners discussed dates on the next knotweed clean-up session. Everyone agreed a weekend morning (specifically a Saturday) would work the best. A. Graminski will send an email out to all commissioners about a Saturday work session in the next few weeks.

G. Adjourn

Next meeting will be held on August 25, 2020 at 5:15 PM.