

Bethel Conservation Commission Minutes – 3/10/15

Present Mary Floyd, Emily Miller, Tom Warhol, Moe Brigham, Dave Stanley, Victoria Weber (guest for the first item)

Action on Minutes minutes from February were approved.

Business

- Victoria Weber talked with us about the history of ancient roads (aka. rights of passage, rights of way) in Bethel and Vermont and presented resources that might be useful in developing criteria:
 - History in Bethel:
 - John Dutton was an amazing resource and helped create an ancient road database for Bethel. Victoria took notes during their work together; those notes now make up Bethel's "Roads Diary";
 - Bethel went to court about ancient road issues previously.
 - arguments for and against the town keeping ancient roads:
 - con: habitat fragmentation, spread of invasives along paths and roads, destructive to sensitive ecological areas, makes it more complicated for conservation of land.
 - pro: ancient roads can provide access to landlocked property, redundancy in a situation like Irene, it's the town's resource.
 - revival of the ancient roads committee:
 - tasked with creating criteria to use in deciding whether roads should be discontinued or kept;
 - role of the CC: should be charged with protecting the ecology of these areas;
 - development of criteria:
 - Victoria was quick to point out that she would like to distance herself from the development of criteria to avoid any conflict of interest. The CC appreciates this and also appreciates that Victoria is sharing her deep knowledge of this issue and available resources with the relevant parties in Bethel.
 - Victoria urged that many varied resources should be considered when developing criteria including the criteria developed by the towns of Calais, Charlotte and Rockingham, Act 178, and others.
 - reminded that the criteria should work with the town plan.
 - Caution should be used with "Trail" designation.
 - the CC would like to review whatever criteria are developed by the ancient roads committee before it is adopted by the Selectboard.
- Branliere Forest
 - the CC considered two possible grant opportunities to fund work in Branliere from VT Urban and Community Forestry :
 - hosting Arbor Day (unknown \$);
 - Communities Caring for Tree Canopies (up to \$40,000);
 - grant deadlines are too soon (April) to pursue this year, but the CC should keep them in mind for 2016.

- Tom received forest management plans and other info on town forests from Windsor County Forester Jon Bouton. Tom will share these electronically with the rest of the CC.
- 50' setback from rivers and streams:
 - looks like it'll happen to be prepared for flood reimbursements;
 - Planning Commission and Selectboard will be discussing this topic on 3/18. Tom will attend the meeting on behalf of the CC.
- Review proposed Marsh Meadow Management Plan
 - CC is charged with maintenance;
 - Tom pointed out that the language on page 4, section 4(B) regarding the riparian buffer is confusing. Suggested changes were sent to Keith Arlund.

New Business

- CC will develop a "To-Do" List and status for each item that the CC is working on.
 - Emily will go through past minutes and develop a draft list.
- Culvert inventory
 - TRORC has (nearly) completed a culvert inventory for Bethel;
 - Emily to ask TRORC whether the maps developed through the inventory is also available in a digital form or up in a database.
- Mary has requested a space to store CC files in the town office (Keith's working on it).

Meeting adjourned at 8:15pm

Next meeting will be April 14th, at 6:30pm.