

Bethel Conservation Commission Minutes – 5/13/14

Present Mary Floyd, Moe Brigham, Tom Warhol, Emily Miller, Jon Fago, Carla Hodgdon, and a guest (Jon Bouton) at the Town Offices.

Action on Minutes approved minutes from April meeting as written.

Business

- Jon Bouton, Windsor County Forester, came to talk with us about the town forests and forest management in general.
 - Quick overview of the 3 town forests:
 - Branliere (70 ac): Ms. Branliere (who donated the parcel to the town) wanted leave the it to Bethel's children.
 - Quimby (160ac): Jon Bouton had some notes of a walk he did here ~5 years ago
 - Camp Brook Lot (250 ac): became town land in 1966 (?), interesting wetland
 - Jon will provide us with notes on these parcels.
 - No management/cutting in last 20-30 years on any of these; Quimby was cut without county forester assistance/oversight at about that time.
 - We talked about different things to keep in mind in managing forests:
 - historical use, goals
 - Deeds from properties (title search on the other two forests) and stories from these forests: how they came to be owned by town.
 - pinpoint uses, etc. on large-scale maps from public
 - inventory: natural communities, geology, soils, understory, wildlife
 - Jon doesn't have the time to do it all, but he may be able to oversee/do at an arm's length
 - the CC could pursue a grant to hire a consulting forester to put together a management plan like a current use plan (Hartford did this; Norwich is also working with a private consultant; ballpark estimate for the Branliere parcel to give us an idea- might cost \$1500-2000)
 - consider having a forester lay out log roads if any logging is to be done.
 - Is there any potential for community solar arrays on any of these forest parcels or other town land?
 - Towns that might serve as models in forest management:
 - Hartford: has timber management plan, recreation plan, inventory of amphibians and reptiles, wildlife habitat assessment, Audubon bird habitat assessment (will do free of charge). Does have a budget generated from taxes and timber sales. Uses Natural Resources program at Tech Center. Mountain bike trail impacts have been a problem.
 - David Paginelli, Orange County Forester, works closely with town forest management in some towns. Potential resource to the CC.
 - Emerald Ash Borer – should we be cutting ash? If there are trees close to harvest, yes, but there's no need to cut it all.

- Jon talked with us about an app being used for invasive species: iNaturalist (VT Center for Ecostudies' Project called Atlas of Life) and another Project called Mapping for Healthy Forests: users can take a picture of the invasive (eg. garlic mustard, buckthorn, honeysuckle, bittersweet, barberry) with their smart phone and upload the information to the project. It's a simple way of mapping invasives throughout the state.

- VYCC Project Updates
 - River Street Bridge boat-launch project update: stone donated by Rock of Ages, picked up by town; work will be done the first week of June VYCC.
 - If there's time, VYCC will cut a trail on the southern end of the Marsh Meadows .

- Need to request funds to become members in the VT Association of Conservation Commission. Tom will get Mary an application to bring to Selectboard.
- To be discussed next time: public forum for public access (river and otherwise).

Meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.

Next meeting will be June 10th, at 6:30pm.