

Town of Williston Conservation Commission (WCC)
Minutes of August 2, 2017

Approved

Members Present:	Jean Kissner, Anthony Jordick, Jude Hersey, Kim Coleman, Carl Runge, Eric Howe
Members Absent:	Gary Hawley
Staff Present:	Melinda Scott, Garrett Chisholm
Others Present:	Sheila McIntyre and Jane Stowell (Lake View Farm), Bill Spencer and Shawn Sweeney (Spencer Lot B).

1. **Call to Order:** Anthony called the meeting to order at 7:07 AM.
2. **Public Comment:** None.
3. **Approval of July 19 minutes:** Eric made a motion and Carl seconded the motion to approve the July 19 minutes as written. The motion was carried with a 6-0 vote.
4. **DP 16-23 – Lake View Farm:** Sheila and Jane introduced themselves and gave an overview of the project. This project was reviewed by the Conservation Commission as a Preapplication for a 2-lot subdivision in 2016. The project received Growth Management Allocation in March 2017 and has submitted a DP application. The project hasn't changed significantly since Preapplication. The WCC discussed the recommendations given at Preapplication and whether the applicant has addressed them. The WCC recommend that the applicant be allowed to mow around the 2 ponds on Lot 2, and that those ponds have no buffers. Jean made a motion to approve the Findings and Recommendations as written, Jude seconded the motion. The motion was carried with a 6-0 vote.
5. **DP 17-30 Spencer Lot B:** Scott Gardner submitted an application recently to have 1 unit of expired allocation reinstated on a 3-lot subdivision on Pumpkin Hill Rd. The WCC reviewed this in the spring of this year, and Gardner subsequently withdrew his application. Now Bill Spencer is applying to reinstate the allocation for Lot B. Melinda stated that the subdivision was approved prior to the implementation of the current Chapter 27 Conservation Areas regulations. The current configuration of open space does not meet the intent and purpose of today's bylaw. In order to have expired reallocation reinstated without having to compete with other subdivisions, the bylaw states the subdivision has to meet certain conditions, including that it has to be in substantial compliance with the intent or purpose of today's bylaw. That being said, the DRB's authority to attach additional conditions to the subdivision is very limited, but they could require the applicant to compete with other subdivisions for the allocation rather than simply reinstating it. Last time the Conservation

Commission looked at this project, they recommended a reconfiguration of the open space on Lot C, such that would allow a greater amount of contiguous, unfragmented wildlife habitat. Spencer stated that he does not control Lot C where the open space needs to be reconfigured, and that it would be up to the Lot C property owner. Jude recommended that we get in touch with owner of Lot C and ask him to come to the DRB hearing next Tuesday so that they can resolve the issue. Carl suggested revising the Findings and Recommendations #2 to add “unless the open space is reconfigured.” Eric made a motion to approve Findings and Recommendations as revised, Kim seconded the motion. The motion was carried with a 6-0 vote.

6. **Garrett’s Project Presentation:** Garrett gave a summary of his independent project. The objective was to gather data to further refine the SWHA. Garrett developed a geospatial database of wildlife sightings from various sources including WVPD, Where the Wild Things Are report, Williston mammal sightings, and Front Porch Forum. A total of 322 points/sightings were mapped. Garrett researched how conservation planners use wildlife sightings. They can be overlayed with different layers such as land cover, waterways, elevation to discern patterns. For Williston, many of the sightings are correlated with streams and water sources as they serve as natural funnels and as a buffer for noise and traffic. The data could be used to refine existing regulatory layers and/or develop new corridor layers. Garrett recommends signage and driver education to promote connectivity along roadways. Road crossings can be predicted where there is forested cover on both sides of the road. This project can kick off a record-keeping system for wildlife sightings in Williston. This data should be viewed as “presence only” data, as it’s impossible to prove absence. Garrett’s next step is to establish an iNaturalist sight for the public to record sightings.

7. Staff Report/Other Business

- **Catamount Update** – First meeting of the Committee was held on Monday, July 31. The meeting focused on introductions, developing a process for group dynamics and establishing a decision making protocol. The next meeting will be on August 15, and will get into content – what is a community forest, what are the restrictions around which we have to work. Ethan Tapper, Kate Wanner, Kort Longenbach will give presentations. Jude recommended writing articles for the Observer about the progress of the project.
- **Potential land donation** – Melinda provided information to the WCC about a potential donation of land to the Town. Carl is familiar with this area, has birded there in the past. It can be accessed from the Butternut development off of Essex Rd. There is better access from Morgan Parkway but there would need to be negotiations with the property owners to get access. Anthony asked what the

benefit to the Town would be, if it could ever be developed. Melinda stated that while it would be possible to develop it, the property is constrained by lack of access and steep slopes. Eric mentioned, if the Town doesn't want to accept the donation, the owner could consider donating it to an organization like WVPD, Vermont River Conservancy, or the Lake Champlain Land Trust.

- **August 16 meeting** – Melinda stated that the next scheduled meeting occurs on Bennington Battle Day, and asked whether the WCC wanted to reschedule the meeting or skip it? They decided to reschedule for Aug 23 unless there's not enough business to justify a meeting. Melinda will confirm.
- **Winooski Valley Park District** – Melinda and Rick McGuire met with Nick Warner and Rita Dessau from the WVPD and their consultant Katherine Decarreau to discuss Williston's relationship with the WVPD and the status of the funding formula. They were interested in knowing what services they could provide that would be of value to Williston. They would like to follow up with the WCC at a future meeting.
- **Muddy Brook riparian plantings** – Melinda is working with the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District (WNRCD) to scope out potential planting sites in the Muddy Brook watershed. Melinda has conducted a preliminary GIS analysis to identify and prioritize potential sites, in order to develop a short list of property owners to contact. The WNRCD has proposed using Trees for Streams funding to do a planting in Williston, and Melinda has agreed to assist in the planning of this.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:53 am.

Minutes Submitted by Melinda Scott: 9/13/2017

Approved by WCC: 9/13/2017