

HINESBURG CONSERVATION COMMISSION

*Rob Farley, Dave Hirth, Melissa Levy,
Bill Marks, Nancy Plunkett, Gerry Livingston (Chair)*

MINUTES of June 25, 2007

Opening

The regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was called to order at 7:05 PM on June 25, 2007 in the Town Hall by Gerry Livingston.

Present: *Conservation Commission Members Rob Farley, Melissa Levy, Bill Marks, Nancy Plunkett, and Gerry Livingston; Planning Commission Member Jo White; Town Planner Alex Weinhagen; David Raphael and Natalie Steen of Landworks; Polly Harris of Woodlot Associates, Inc.; and Jens Hielke of the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife*

Absent: *Dave Hirth*

Greenspace and Cultural Resources Plan

Landworks and Woodlot Associates, Inc. were recently contracted by the Town to assist with the completion of the Greenspace and Cultural Resources Plan. The purpose of tonight's meeting was for the Conservation Commission (CC) and other town officials to meet representatives of Landworks and Woodlot Associates, Inc. to initiate discussion on the way forward.

After introductions, CC members related their current areas of focus and the goals of the Plan. The first section to be brought to the Planning Commission (PC) will be on water quality to be followed by forest and agricultural resources. The importance of education and public feedback were discussed at some length.

David discussed the interconnectedness of impacts on natural resources; aesthetic degradation usually means environmental degradation. He also noted that Hinesburg already has strong zoning regulations in place that can be built upon or amended to help guide future growth, although the will and interests of the community must be addressed. Alex indicated that we need to get input as soon as is possible not only from the public but also other conservation-related organizations and Town regulators on what they consider valued resources and how they should be protected. Follow on discussion focused on the two operational objectives of the GCRP: 1) science — describing our natural and cultural resources, and 2) education — learning what the public values, providing administrators and the public detailed information on the issues at hand, and offering recommendations on how to protect our valued resources yet minimize any “taking.” The question remains as to how to respect individual rights but educate landowners about the benefits of conservation and in developing area-wide management plans.

Discussion followed on what data are needed to address the goals and priorities of the Town Plan. Jens recommended that we identify important and core habitats to supplement existing wildlife and habitat data. He also noted he would assist us by providing access to data as available and in defining potential corridors deserving special consideration. There was discussion about identifying working agricultural lands and the difficulty of prioritizing what resources deserve protection. David suggested a landscape approach which would aid landowners to prioritize how best to utilize their lands.

How to integrate our various efforts towards completing the GCRP was discussed at some length. It was agreed that frequent and open communication is essential both amongst ourselves and the public. LandWorks will propose ideas for at least two public forums and on how to maintain public interaction throughout the process. Landworks will draft a detailed work plan in the next 2-3 weeks incorporating the information they have received to date and will forward it for review. Other ideas discussed included newspaper articles, improved Internet presence, and public seminar series.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM by Gerry Livingston. The next general meeting will be at 7:00 PM on July 9 at the Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by: Nancy Plunkett