DRAFT CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
March 11, 2019
Craftsbury Town Hall

PRESENT: Farley Brown, June Cook, Joe Houston, Carol Maroni, Diane Morgan, ,Elinor Osborn, Steve Wright

ABSENT: John Brodhead, Susie Houston, Sel. Bd. Liaison

MINUTES: Minutes of January 28, 2019 approved as submitted.

TOWN MEETING: June reported the commission presence at the town meeting was commendable and thanked Diane, Elinor, and Steve for their work in making the display informative and attractive.

ATV DISCUSSION: Diane noted two separate issues are involved: (1) Select Board asking town committees to give their input on proposed ATV ordinance for opening town roads to ATV's. (2) Conservation Commission's concern with natural resources and natural heritage of town and making formal statement. ATV's do a lot of damage causing soil erosion, pollution of waterways, increasing noise levels, interfering with wildlife. The two issues go hand in hand but any formal statements should be directed towards the natural resources and natural heritage. Individual members may have personal comments and should do so; however, it is not the commission's role to comment on those issues.

Diane noted State Statutes require ATV riders to have written permission of private landowners when riding on private property. Opening roads will lead to more accessibility on trails and private properties. Joe noted it is a difficult situation trying to contain something that is going on illegally already and more is to be gained by working with people then just saying No. Commission should be cognizant of the natural heritage which includes noise, water way protection, soil erosion, wildlife, natural resources.

Carol suggested the town could reach a compromise that will work for everyone. At previous meeting ATV riders wanted (1) to be able to go to village stores and (2) to be able to go outside the town to other places. Roads should be identified to meet that goal. Lowell and Danville issue permits to ATV riders to use town roads. Danville issues permits to only Danville residents. Issuing permits only to Craftsbury riders was suggested with ATV riders receiving maps of town roads that are accessible, expected behaviors and what is considered unacceptable behaviors. Start with giving permits only to residents as a first step was suggested.

Carol mentioned Steve Wright's letter to the editor regarding ATV use, and brought the February issue of Yankee Magazine where there is a timely article about a lawsuit happening in Coos County New Hampshire regarding ATV usage in the town of

Gorham. She noted every issue mentioned in Steve's letter has been identified as a real issue. At the initial hearing the judge ruled in favor of the residents to hear the nuisance claim against the town in Superior Court.

The Sheriff's Department has a contract with VASA to enforce regulations on VASA trails, not on public roads. Law enforcement officers – town constable, state police, game wardens, municipal police, and sheriff – have the authority to enforce regulations pertaining to ATV's.

An ordinance could include identifying roads open to Craftsbury residents living on that road only and those open to all Craftsbury riders. In that way all residents could get from their homes to the main open roads in town without a significant increase in ATV traffic on all roads.

The commission first became involved because of reports that ATV riders were riding in Wild Branch River. Farley noted the commission should ensure that the position regarding that issue be foremost and the signage is installed this spring as ~~had been~~ planned.

After lengthy discussion, the consensus was as follows:

The Conservation Commission recommends a taskforce be formed and comprised of a representative from the Select Board, Conservation Commission, Energy Committee, Road Safety Committee, Planning Board, Recreation Committee, and Town Constable, as well as, representatives from ATV riders and other stakeholders. It is recommended the services of a trained facilitator be utilized and designated timeline be implemented. The taskforce purpose would be to provide input to the select board on any proposed ordinance and guidance in addressing issues, such as

(1) Speed limits to ensure safe usage of public roads by pedestrians and non-motorized users
(2) Safety issues pertaining to ATV's
(3) Noise levels and right to quiet enjoyment of property
(4) Curfew implementations
(5) Policing as the town has no police/sheriff contracts
(6) Usage on Class 4 roads and trails
(7) Protection of private property
(8) Degradation of property values
(9) Potential relating to soil erosion, pollution to waterways, degradation of environment, and wildlife
(10)Permits for residents and non-resident ATV riders (Danville and Lowell)
(11)Review and identify roads
(12)Dissemination of information and education

Joe will contact the select board to convey the commission's recommendation. He will ask the select board to ensure that appointments are made to the commission as there will now be two vacancies.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

OTHER BUSINESS:
Diane asked if the Conservation Commission would invite Tom Rogers from VT. Dept. Of Fish & Wildlife to talk about Vermont Wildlife. A brief discussion ensued. Steve Wright made the motion seconded by Elinor Osborn which was unanimously approved by those present. Farley agreed to coordinate the invitation to Tom Rogers and organize the public event, to be held at Sterling College.

Farley reported she has submitted a small grant to coordinate the 10-years of data collected at Sterling College and the Conservation Commission's Black River Watershed project. The grant will set up four demonstration sites along the river indicating river ecology and river health.

Joe indicated his term on the commission has expired and he will not be seeking re-appointment at this time but may consider doing so in the future. His presence will be deeply missed. Commission members expressed gratitude for his service and stewardship during his tenure.

No further meetings will be held in March unless a special meeting is called. The next meeting of the Commission will be April 22 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Submitted by June Pichel Cook, Secretary