

DRAFT-Conservation Commission Minutes
February 22, 2016

Present: Farley Brown, June Cook, Emily Diaz, Carol Maroni, Joe Houston, Susie Houston, Elinor Osborn, Leah Szafranski, Steve Wright.

Absent: Carly Brown, Diane Morgan

Minutes: Minutes of January 11, 2016 were approved.

Report on Land Use Task Force: Carol explained the task force was formed after the community visit project. The name was changed from Land Protection Task Force to Land Use Task Force. The group divided into two sub-committees. An outreach sub-committee was formed to identify landholders and seek input from them.

Farley explained the second sub-committee was looking at regulatory tools used in land-use protocols, studying town plans/zoning by-laws and regulations from surrounding communities, and looking at tools utilized for implementing community goals. Flood plain zoning and ordinances are examples of regulatory tools.

Report on Conservation Fund: Susie reported the select board decided to establish a fund on its own and not go to town vote. Establishing a conservation fund creates a venue for individuals to which they can donate or leave estate bequests. The fund should be highlighted through press releases, Front Porch Forum or other outlets to let people know about it.

Joe explained plans are not to earmark how funds would be used for now. A general discussion is needed about bringing money into the fund; people would want to know how the money will be used. Establishing a sub-committee to put together a plan was determined as the next step. The sub-committee would be an advisory group. Checking with other communities who have funds was suggested.

Essential to be inclusive. Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions is currently having the same type of discussion relative to establishing funds. Suggestions ranged from organizing a campaign, looking at the Good Neighbor Fund, and forming a group to spearhead the Conservation Fund.

A sub-committee was formed with Emily, Leah, and Steve. The group will lay out a fundraising plan which could broaden into local support. They would establish goals, formulate fundraising ideas, advertise the fund, and create guidelines.

Town Meeting Planning: Elinor and Steve will coordinate a photographic exhibit highlighting commissions activities outlined in the town report. More detailed write-ups on the activities will be part of the display. The exhibit should be placed

next to the Planning Commission display. Carol will do a synopsis on ACT 56 and energy. Joe will write up knotweed workshop.

Commission Structure: Discussion ensued on alternate's role and will be brought up at next meeting. Under enabling legislation which established conservation commissions, terms of commission members should be 4-year terms. As individual commissioner's terms expire, Joe will talk to the select board about making terms 4 years in length on new appointees or reappointments.

Sun Common Albany Project: Carol reported on the Sun Common project which will cover a large field off Eden Road. It is a private development. She circulated copies of the Atty. General's "Guidelines for Third-Party Solar Projects," and called attention to selling renewable energy credits, then advertising energy as being renewable.

Electricity generated from any source flows into a common pool. Renewable energy credits are the only accounting way of characterizing energy as coming from a renewable source. Sun Common, in building a renewable energy project in Vermont and selling the RECS outside the state, can't advertise people are buying renewable energy. The RECS have to be retired in state for that claim to be made.

People think they may be buying renewable energy and they are not. Only the purchaser of the RECS has the legal right to claim its renewable energy. She explained developers are cornering the market on the most desirable locations and using up the net-metering capacity pool mandated by the legislature for utilities. VEC is at its capacity. Individuals are shut off from participating if the capacity is filled.

The situation is that the 7% guarantee by SunCommon is actually the legislative mandated amount that the utilities need to provide for their customers. SunCommon markets this as if it is coming from there.

There are many misleading things about solar energy: solar energy credits being sold out of state and promising less to people than what is mandated. Misrepresentations are being made to consumers.

Steve explained the Federal Trade Commission is the adjudicating body on RECS, not the Attorney General's office.

Other Business: Farley reported on the Town Plan and distributed a synopsis of the commission's section.

Public Comment: None

The Commission will hold its next meeting on Monday, March 28, 2016, in the Town Hall at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by June Pichel Cook, Secretary