

NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 20, 2008

Tracy Hall - Meeting Room

Members Present: Daniel Johnson, Jeff Goodrich, Tom Gray, Ralph Hybels,

Members Absent: Jaye Pershing Johnson, Brooke Adler, Richard Stucker

Clerk: Phil Dechert

Others: Jens Hilke, Ed Childs, Craig Layne, Lynn McGrew

Daniel Johnson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:39 p.m.

1. Approve Agenda – Agenda was approved by **unanimous consent**.

2. Comments from the Public – None.

3. Wildlife Habitat Zoning

ANR Town Support

Jens Hilke, a conservation biologist with the Agency of Natural Resources, explained that he was available to support towns with project review and municipal regulations but that he was covering the entire State. Forest Hammond may also be available to review specific development projects. State review would only be advisory for the local board and requests to the State should be reasonable.

He advised that town regulations needed specific definitions for features to be protected including the species, and inventory map where possible. These definitions will vary from town to town reflecting town values. Hartford and Shrewsbury have Wildlife Corridor Overlay Districts.

Linking Lands Alliance

The Linking Lands Alliance is a group of 11 towns that has been mapping wildlife connectivity and corridors on a regional basis since 2000. Hilke is the coordinator and GIS specialist for the group. The final map will include prioritized habitat blocks of undeveloped land and connections between the blocks. The larger blocks will support more biological diversity. Smaller blocks with rare species will be identified. Connections between blocks may indicate road crossings that should be protected. The final map will be an advisory document.

On October 20th there will be a community workshop in Norwich to allow residents to identify and prioritize areas of special interest based on their first hand knowledge from various outdoor activities. Participation by hunters, conservationists, farmers, hikers, and any other interested citizens will be welcome.

Later in the winter there will be a review by wildlife biologists, foresters, and others with a scientific background to identify natural communities.

Zoning for Wildlife Habitat

Steps for developing zoning for wildlife habitat include:

- Forming a consensus on what should be protected
 - Deer may not be as appropriate indicator as bear, bobcat, or fisher
- Creating inventories and maps to identify significant natural areas and crossings
 - Portions of the Linking Lands Alliance mapping may be useful along with other available layers

Lynn McGrew expressed his concern with the lack of habitat review in the current zoning draft under review by the Selectboard and would like to see the original wording from the August 2007 draft restored.

4. Adjournment – 6:50 PM

Phil Dechert

APPROVED 9-11-08

Future Meetings:

Thursday, September 11 at 7 PM

Thursday, September 25 at 7 PM