

Quality of Community Committee 17 December 2014 draft minutes  
Commencement 6 pm

Appointees present: Susan Brink, Jeff Goodrich, Lee Michaelides, Craig Layne  
Select board members present: Stephen Flanders, Linda Cook

No changes were made to the agenda. There were no public comments.

18 November minutes moved by C. Layne, seconded by J. Goodrich, approved.

The Committee reviewed the idea of a community charrette and concluded that it was not ready to employ that tool at this point. The Committee then reviewed its Statement of Purpose, which is “The role of the Committee is to make recommendations to the Select board regarding strategic planning options for an integrated system of recreational trails and bike lanes, Connecticut River frontage, open space and the conservation of natural and scenic resources.” The Committee discussed the scope of its charge to include questions of regional sustainability. We need to think about recommendations regarding each attribute and feature of community quality in terms of whether it is sustainable for the region. For example, as the commuter population grows does it make sense to facilitate rural sprawl (that fragments forests, develops in wetlands and increases fossil fuels consumption) in more distant towns instead of developing the commuter housing needs within the four-town area? Are 5 acres of forest in Norwich worth 100 acres of forest in Sharon? Is 1 acre of wetland in Norwich worth 10 acres of wetland in Pomfret? The Committee discussed the view that Norwich is a residential village where people can do most things they need by walking, so the question is what else is needed, i.e., what are those features that add to quality of community? One example is more inter-connected trails (within town and among towns) and sidewalks. Signage, access to private lands, connectivity and landowner participation in creating trail connectivity were discussed. It was noted that there is a well-connected trail network in some parts of rural Norwich.

Discussion ensued about projects that have been planned and funded, but not executed, including the trail connecting to Harford, parallel to Route 5 South and the Church Street safe routes to school project. The Committee will recommend to the select board the prioritization of just such trail and sidewalk projects. It will promote landowner buy-ins to move the projects forward. The Committee will review similar projects in East Burke, Hartland, and Colchester-Burlington. The Committee will seek input from other interested groups. Committee members will brainstorm who should be contacted.

The Committee suggested discussing the following at the next meeting on 7 January:

- A status report on the trail and safe route to school projects.

- Maps that provide an overview of Norwich’s recreational assets

- Identification of trail resource people and the questions that would be asked of them

Adjournment 7:15

Minutes submitted by C. Layne

