

Norwich Conservation Commission draft minutes of 19 November 2019

Present: Cheryl Asa, Lynwood Andrews, Norm Miller, Chris Rimmer, David Hubbard, Craig Layne, Mary Sellmann, Cody Williams

Absent: David Hobson

Guests: Jaci Allen (planning), Brie Swenson (recreation)

Commencement 7:05 pm

The Town Plan Land Use chapter was discussed. It was pointed out that a town plan is not literally a plan, but rather a vision about the future of a town. The commission was asked to help make citizens aware of this fact. The Planning Commission was congratulated for how seamlessly and adroitly they incorporated a vision of protections for major forest blocks and habitat connectors into the plan. The vision of a small amount of affordable housing development in the village being done within a system of "planning areas" in town, without posing any threat to natural features, was discussed. Some amount of incongruity within the objectives of the chapter were discussed and will be communicated to the Planning Commission and Town Planner. Suggestions and comments about the Land Use chapter should be directed to the Planning Commission and/or Conservation Commission.

Natural Resources Inventories were discussed in light of other towns doing more presentation of data collected than does Norwich. For example, Thetford does slideshows and Hartford does website availability. It was suggested Norwich could share data with educational workshops covering such things as birds and vernal pools. It was also suggested that field outings on those topics would be better attended than would inventory presentations. Perhaps it would be best to combine field outings with evening slideshows, letting residents decide if they would like to attend one, the other, or both. The Village Nature Area was suggested as a likely place to hold a field outing, perhaps involving a BioBlitz.

A possible pollinator meadow at the northeast end of Huntley Meadow was discussed. The overwhelming buckthorn problem in and around the meadow would make it an overwhelming project in terms of people power and funds. The new thinking is about a community garden area focused around highbush blueberries. There are promising model systems in other towns. The project would still require many participants, a possible controlled burn, buckhorn cutting and bagging, and repeated mowing among the fruit trees; but it would be much more doable than revegetating an entire meadow. People interested in the project should contact the Recreation Department and/or Conservation Commission.

The commission will resume roadside ash counts now that the growing season is done. Commissioners will receive email notification of upcoming counting trips. Other people interested in helping with ash tree counting should contact the Conservation Commission.

Both October and November minutes will need to be approved in December.

Meeting adjourned 8:25pm.

Minutes recorded by D. Hubbard

Minutes submitted by C. Layne