

Norwich Conservation Commission Draft Minutes for Jan 21, 2020

Present – Craig Layne, Mary Sellmann, Cheryl Asa, Cody Williams, Lynnwood Andrews

Absent – David Hubbard, Chris Rimmer, Norm Miller

Public – Charlotte Metcalf, Colin and Marcia Calloway

Floodplains, river corridors, and wetlands were discussed. Cheryl explained Wetlands, floodplains and river corridors not discussed as much in town plan discussions as forest blocks, wildlife corridors, etc. Marcia Calloway expressed concern about flooding. Her property was flooded in the past due to activity on a neighboring property. She felt there was insufficient attention to flooding hazards in the current town plan. The culvert under Route 5 for Blood Brook is insufficient. Rod Francis indicated the culvert was under state jurisdiction. Ms. Calloway is further concerned that the map showing the Blood Brook watershed does not really capture its importance effectively. Mr. Calloway expressed concern about the wetlands along the pond on his property and across the street near the Dresden fields. Ms. Metcalf stated that the wetlands near her property, the river, etc. were not included on state maps and plans. She did not feel it was adequate for Norwich to rely on the state. Ms. Calloway is worried about significant flooding along Route 5 south in the event of a major storm and the plan for increased affordable housing along 5 south. She believes 5 north does not carry the same risk for flood damage. Craig summarized their concerns as a problem of inclusion – mixed use area on 5 south, and exclusion – not sufficiently taking floodplain and wetland protections into account. He also discussed the classifications of wetlands and how the protection of them as well as of stream corridors and floodplains lies in the zoning and subdivision regulations. Mr. Calloway expressed concern about the protection of forest lands at the expense of route 5 south development.

Connecticut River Dams and shoreline erosion were discussed. A proposal is circulating to ask for remediation as part of relicensing process for the dams. It is unclear what stream bank remediation procedures would be considered. The proposal is nonbinding. Craig will ask the town manager about the town contributing to a series of letters and articles from affected towns.

David Hobson has resigned from the Conservation commission. Thank you, David, for your excellent service. We will still follow-up with David about the ash tree survey for the emerald ash borer invasion.

There will be no Conservation Commission Norwich Times article for the Winter issue.

An expanded Town Forest project was discussed. “C. Layne moved (M. Sellmann seconded) that the Norwich Conservation Commission advise use of the current Conservation Trust Fund, up to an amount of \$130k, in combination with funds from initial fundraising, of at least \$20k, as matching funds in pursuit of a VT Conservation and Housing Board grant, \$150k maximum, to expand and enhance the town forest by purchasing land connecting the current town forest with the Gile Mt. tract; this expansion of forest block conservation would have many benefits, including carbon sequestration, contiguous forest maintenance, ridgeline protection, wildlife corridor protection, wildlife habitat enhancements, and environmental educational opportunities”. Motion approved unanimously. The project would require additional fundraising and grant applications.

Cody reported that he met with the Trails committee and they have their own website that they will introduce soon. Cody asked that we send information we have on invasive plants, former NT articles, and any other material as content.

Craig moved approval of November minutes. Lynnwood seconded. Approved unanimously.

Minutes taken by L. Andrews, submitted by C. Layne