

DRAFT
Calais Conservation Commission Minutes
7/8/2015 - Calais town office

Present: Larry Bush, Julie Hand, Stephanie Kaplan, Drew Lamb, Neal Maker (recorder), Grant Ornstein

Guests: Matt Barewicz, Steve Cusick, John Ramsay (VT Land Trust), Ann Smith (Friends of the Winooski)

Proceedings:

- Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm.
- June meeting minutes were discussed and approved.
- The conservation fund's balance is \$74,636.15 as of 6/30/15.
- The commission welcomed its newest member, Larry Bush.

- Conservation of the former Legare Farm
 - John Ramsay reported on the conservation easement negotiations going on between the Vermont Land Trust and the new owner, Pete Johnson of Bub's Best LLC. They have agreed on the terms of the easement, which will keep the land in active agricultural production and protect the riparian area along the Kingsbury Branch. The purchase price has not been determined yet, because the appraisal is not complete, but the land trust is seeking funding from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. They would like a show of support from the Conservation Commission in the form of a letter of support or a contribution of \$1000 to \$2000 toward the easement purchase.
 - The commission agreed to discuss the project at the upcoming August meeting before deciding what role to take.
 - Ann Smith expressed interest in streambank restoration on the property, and will coordinate with John to visit the land and consider the possibility of the Friends of the Winooski becoming involved.

- Water quality concerns on the Armstrong Farm
 - Stephanie updated the commission on the state of the Armstrong Farm on Pekin Brook Road. The commission is concerned about soil erosion on the property and the resulting sedimentation of Pekin Brook. Ella Armstrong of Northfield owns the land, but her uncle John Armstrong farmed it until he passed away last year. There is no longer livestock on the land, but Doug Lilley has been cutting hay there to keep the fields productive. Ella is currently trying to sell the property.
 - Ann will reach out to Ella about doing water quality improvement work on the land, and the commission can become involved if Ella shows interest. If not, the commission will wait until the property sells and reach out to the next owner.

- Executive Session
 - An executive session was voted in at 8:25 to discuss a real estate matter because premature knowledge of the matter by the public could compromise negotiations. The executive session was concluded at 9:00.

- Bliss Forest mapping
 - Drew was contacted by David Ellenbogen, who passed on an offer from the Cross Vermont Trail Association. They have funding to map Vermont trails, and wondered if Calais wants help mapping the Bliss Town Forest trail network.
 - Drew noted that we have already mapped the trails and have plans to post a map at the trailhead, and Stephanie suggested we politely decline the offer. The other members agreed. Drew will respond to David and the Trail Association via email.

- Town Plan Action Steps

After sharing individual interests, members organized several working groups to address action steps in the town plan. Each group will work on one or more action steps related to their topic. Groups are as follows:

 - Riparian Area & Shoreline Conservation – Larry, Julie, Stephanie, Grant
 - Town Forest Planning & Management – Drew, Neal
 - Town Gravel Resource Identification – Stephanie, Julie
 - In addition, Grant will work with the Planning Commission and Selectboard on creating a groundwater ordinance.

- Other business
 - The Friends of the Winooski is interested in approaching a number of Calais landowners about streambank restoration on their properties. Ann Smith will share the list with the commission once it is completed.
 - Matt Peters has identified properties he would like to visit to aid his work on the town natural resources inventory. Stephanie will forward the list of landowners to the rest of the commission and members will let her know which landowners they know and can contact for permission. No private properties will be visited without landowner permission.

- The next meeting is scheduled for August 3rd at 7:00 pm at the town office.
- Meeting adjourned at 9:53 pm.