

Planning Commission & Calais Selectboard Joint Special Meeting
Tuesday, July 19, 2016

Present: Planning Commission Members Gary Root, John McCullough, Ronnie Shaw, Paul Rose, Janice Ohlsson, Melanie Kehne. Selectboard Members: Denise Wheeler, John Brabant

Others Present: Barbara Weedon, Ruth Porter, Margaret Bowen, Dot Naylor, Steve Sweeney, Noreen Bryan, Colleen Bloom, Neal Maker, Stephanie Kaplan

Gary Root called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Amy Picotte presented a slideshow: *Lake Friendly Living: Shoreland Best Management Practices*.

Calais history with lakes and rivers.

-Surface water concerns

Lakes and Ponds Shoreland best practices

-Some discussion followed about the effect of local zoning regulations on “lake friendly” practices.
-Amy explained that the Vermont Lakes Scorecard is a resource for up to date information about water quality, invasive species, shoreland and lake habitat, and atmospheric pollution. She explained that the findings in local lakes and ponds show a trend of a slight (significant) increase in phosphorus. She explained one of the changes that occurs with this increase, in the shallow Littoral Zone.

Discussion on water quality, atmospheric pollution, shoreland and lake habitat, and invasive species.

Curtis Pond highly significant. Water samples taken. How shoreland can reduce phosphorous loading?

Forest Lake-trends for red flags. Increase in phosphorous.

Discussion on shallow water habitat(nursing ground for aquatic life and needed for reproduction and protection).

Discussion of shoreland protection act

-restoring and revitalizing lakes

-Amy reported that Vermont ranks worse than the rest of the nation in the degradation of shallow water habitat. She explained the value of the Shoreland Protection Act and explained the “Lake Wise Award” initiative to recognize properties that meet guidelines for best management “lake friendly” practices. The Lake Wise Award is a voluntary effort, not a regulatory effort.

Discussion of 4 categories: Driveways, septic and structures, recreation areas and shoreline.

-% of impervious surfaces

-% clearing

Discussion of Best Management Practices

-Amy shared examples of storm water/ rainwater management. She explained the benefit of tree canopies with regard to rainwater management. She also explained that many creative septic solutions exist, and she recommends having forums such as “Septic Socials” for community members to learn some of these opportunities.

She spoke about structural best management practices and vegetative best management practices. Amy explained the dependent relationship native insects have with specific native plants, and the effect this has on other animal species (such as birds, and farther along the food chain).

Discussion followed about plant choices for water management.

Discussion of clean water initiative.

Discussion of Native plants

Discussion of roads and lake degradation
-Act 64

Furthur discussion:

John McCullough asked her perspective on how to draw the line between regulation and education/ outreach. She stated that she believes regulation – the Shoreland Protection Act – is critical; however, education and outreach complement regulation.

Amy Picotte stated that Maine has a great system in place; she recommends that board members and planning commission members refer to their system.

Some discussion followed around the issue of lake and pond water quality. The subject of property values along water bodies was discussed. Amy Picotte stated that a correlation exists between water quality and property value. A question was posed: if property owners were asked to plant native habitat in the “lawn to lake” areas, how long would it take to affect the water quality of the lake? Amy Picotte is not sure of the time period.

Mr. McCullough spoke about the broader view of the planning commission, to create larger solutions across property lines, rather than asking each individual property owner to address on his/ her own. Some discussion followed about the need for a collective effort. Amy Picotte’s focus is on the 250 feet of shoreland shallow water area.

She explained that the Shoreland Protection Act is more or less based on Maine’s legislation (which is 40 years old). In 2018, the legislature will reconsider the Shoreland Protection Act. Amy Picotte spoke about limitations in the act as it stands. Board members and planning commission members spoke about the ability of local zoning to be more protective. She also stated that in her opinion, the Act does not address native plants with enough specificity.

The issue of “disturbance” to the shoreline habitat was discussed. Mr. McCullough asked whether Amy Picotte had any opinions or insight into types of docks. She is not aware of any best management practices related to docks.

A community member, Steve Sweeney, expressed his concern about too many very specific regulations, which make any property improvement untenable and cost prohibitive for homeowners.

Ms. Naylor asked: Do Lake Associations help to guide residents? Amy Picotte stated that the department has created a fact sheet about how to create such an association; she believes that associations work well to help protect shoreland.

Gary Root asked how effective Amy Picotte believes the Back Road Management will be in protecting shoreland.

Amy believes that this is a critical component; she suggested having Annie White visit the Curtis Pond road. All of the members present expressed their interest in having an outside consultant/ expert take a look at and provide insight regarding some of these troublesome areas in Calais (including Mirror Lake.)

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 8:55 p.m.

Acknowledgement: Lisa Stoudt, Calais Selectboard Recording Secretary for minutes