Town of Warren
Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 25, 2010

Members Present: Caitrin Noel, Robin Bennett, Jim Edgcomb, Damon Reed, George Schenk, Margo Wade
Others Present: none

Agenda:

1) Call to Order – 7:00 PM
2) Commission Membership
3) Eaton Trails Project
4) Updates
    a. Knot Weed
    b. Tri Town Meeting
    c. Forest, Wildlife & Communities Project
    - VT Vernal Pool Mapping Project
    d. Mad River Path at Kingsbury Farm
    e. Friends of the Mad River planting project at Kingsbury Farm
    f. Other
    - Northfield Ridge Wind Project
6) Other Business:
    a. Approve Invoices
    b. Approve meeting minutes
    c. Selectboard Check-in
    d. Items for next meeting
7) Adjourn – 10:00 PM

1) Call to Order
Robin called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

2) Commission Membership
Robin will resubmit the vacancy notice to the Valley Report and check in with Cindi and Miron to get it up on the Warren web site. Margo will check in with Reta to see if we can use the voter check list to help us identify Warren residents that may be interested in participating on the CC. Each member is charge with identifying potential candidates.

3) Eaton Trail Project
There was discussion about the proposed alignment of the Vista Trail. Is constructing the trail the right thing to do? Concerns include impact to a relatively remote and sensitive area of town and possible liability concerns. Benefits include providing an opportunity to community members for outdoor recreation, the trails proximity to the village and school, introduction of these woodlands to the community, the view from the rock out crop.

The CC is generally in favor of construction the trail. Most of us have had the opportunity to walk the alignment. Sean Lawson (local naturalist) has walk the trail and believes the impact will be limited and are out weighed by getting folk out in the woods. The alignment was developed by Josh Ryan, VT trail designer and builder.

Next steps include: checking in with VYCC for crew scheduling, walking the alignment with the Selectboard (the current SB membership is new to the project), final go ahead.
Train signage is moving slowly forward. Consider include 'no' dog language on the Vista Trails due to the sensitivity of the area.

4) Management Plans
Item tabled for a future meeting. Riverside and Austin plans to be redistributed.

5) Updates
a. Knot Weed
Knot weed spring cut back in begin scheduled. Disposal and timing is being worked out with the Selectboard.

b. Tri Town Meeting
Will be held Knoll Farm on Tuesday, June 8th from 7-9PM. The Warren CC has been asked to speak about development of the management plans, the process and funding, along with our participating with the DRB.

c. Forest, Wildlife & Communities Project
FWC has received grant funding to continue with the project.

There was some discussion of the vernal pool mapping project hosted by the VT Center for Ecostudies. The project is a collaboration between Arrowwood Environmental and VCE and involves the mapping of locations of potential vernal pools throughout Vermont. They are currently recruiting volunteers to field-verify the presence of these potential pools. The contact for our area is Michael Lew-Smith (michael@arrowwoodvt.com).

Vernal pools are wetlands of great interest to ecologists because, despite their small size and simple structure, they are often populated by specialized animal communities. These seasonal wetlands fill with snowmelt and spring rains, but often dry up by late summer. This cycle of flooding and drying prohibits permanent fish populations, while providing critical habitat to wildlife species that are adapted to these unique conditions. In recent years, scientists and naturalists have become aware of the incredible diversity that exists in these pools. Through this awareness comes the understanding that these pockets of diversity play an extremely important role on the ecological landscape, offering essential wildlife habitat to a wide range of species. Many of these species are listed as priority "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" (SGCN) as outlined in the Vermont Wildlife Action Plan. These species include Jefferson, Blue-spotted, Spotted, and Four-toed salamanders, and vernal pool-dependant invertebrates such as fairy shrimp and fingernail clams. In addition, The Vermont Wildlife Action Plan recognizes the importance of vernal pools to the survival of these species by specifically identifying the need to "map and inventory vernal pools statewide." (source: http://www.vtecostudies.org/VPMP/background.html)

d. Mad River Path at Mac's
The Path Association is seeking assistance from the town to get permission and/or and easement for the path to cross the small section of the Mac's parcel as it divided the current Kingsbury Farm parcel path section toward the southern portion of the path. Caitrin will check in with the Path on status of progress on this project and assistance needed from the CC.

e. Friends of the Mad River planting project at Kingsbury Farm
Caitrin explained the up coming tree planning project along the riparian buffer at the Kingsbury Farm. The project involves planning of native species to reestablish the riparian buffer along with a knot weed control component.

f. Other
Waitsfield wind project – Several Warren CC members attend the recent Waitsfield meeting on the Northfield Wind Project. In general we were impressed that Waitsfield opened the meeting to the broader valley community by reaching out to may boards and groups to get attendees to the meeting from outside of Waitsfield. The meeting was polite and cordial and folk were there to learn more about the presenter (Citizens Wind/Citizens Energy). The Waitsfield Town Plan/Zoning specifically disallow wind tower above 1,700 feet. The Planning Commission has been asked to reconsider this position in the plan and regulations. Warren town plan and zoning allow wind towers in the upper elevations. The potential impact of an industrial type wind farm this proposal puts forth would be significant for the Northfield ridgeline. Scale and impact must be considered. Jim suggested the valley should be look at a more European model with smaller scale turbines. Stay tuned.

Executive Session:
Motion by Damon Reed, seconded by Caitrin Noel to enter into executive session to discuss real estate matters. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Motion by Caitrin Noel, seconded by George Schenk to leave executive session to discuss real estate matters. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

No further action was taken.

5) Other Business:
a. Approve Invoices
- none at this time

b. Approve meeting minutes
Motion by Caitrin Noel, seconded by George Schenk to approve the January 19, 2001 and April 13, 2001 meeting minutes. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

7) Adjourn – 10:10 PM
Meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Margo Wade

Conservation Commission

9/21/10
Robin Bennett (date)

9/21/10
Jim Edgcomb (date)

9/21/10
Caitrin Noel (date)

09/21/10
Damon Reed (date)

George Schenk (date)

Margo Wade 9/21/2010
Margo Wade (date)