

BURKE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes April 22, 2009

Present: Ric Prescott, Chris Manges, Andie Kupetz, Dave Ormiston, Cathie Wheeler and Joan Harlowe

Absent: Susan Leskin and Mark Maghini

Guests: Dwight Davis and Ford Hubbard

Dave Ormiston updated the Burke Conservation Commission (BCC) on the meetings he has held to discuss industrial use in the agricultural zones. Since Burke doesn't have an industrial park, the question was raised whether some industry should be allowed in the agricultural zones. Currently the Agricultural-Residential 1 Zone (AR- 1) allows light industry and the Agricultural-Residential 2 Zone (AR-2) allows NO industry. Dave said there has been some progress and consensus among the committee members, but there is further work to do to clearly define the terms and parameters (noise, traffic, truck size, etc) to guide decisions on what type of industry would be allowed and where. There may be a short term solution for the proposed wood pellet plant –if the AR1 zone is extended along Route 5, this would allow Light Industry.

Ric Prescott invited the guests to speak.

Dwight Davis and Ford Hubbard talked about the Dam in East Burke Village on the East Branch of the Passumpsic River. They presented some historical information and expressed their view that the dam should remain in place.

Dwight informed the BCC that the Corps of Engineers makes the final decision about dams on rivers and they have not approved removal of any dam on a designated navigable river such as the East Branch of the Passumpsic River. The Passumpsic Valley Land Trust (PVLТ), who owns the dam, would need state permits and then final approval from the Corps of Engineers to remove the dam. The Corps would consider opinions from townspeople and businesses as to the impact of dam removal before making a decision.

Several BCC members informed the guests that the BCC has not taken a stand on whether the dam should be removed or not. Ric added that one interest for the BCC would be to return the river to a productive state.

Dwight and Ford expressed their strong feelings that the dam needs to be saved, possibly rebuilt with an opportunity to generate power and restore fish habitat. They have an architectural plan for a proposed town park around the dam. Dwight shared his compilation of information on the original Elmer Darling properties, which includes the dam. He informed the BCC that he has applied for the dam to be registered as a National Historic Site.

The guests left and the BCC continued with other business.

March minutes were approved with a motion from Dave, seconded by Andie and all in favor.

Cathie and Chris reported on the April Selectboard meeting. The board approved increasing the size of the BCC to 9 members and appointed Mark Maghini to be our 8th member. Any other people interested in joining the BCC should send a letter of interest to the Selectboard.

Andie reported that Marilyn Pastore is willing to come and talk with the BCC about her proposed development. Andie will see if she can attend our regular meeting on June 17th.

Chris contacted Tracy Zschau (Vermont Land Trust), Matt Langlais (County Forester) and Bill Bridge (Passumpsic Valley Land Trust) about presenting at a Town Conservation Meeting tentatively scheduled for Thursday May 21 at 7PM at the Town Hall. The meeting would be a public information meeting about the current use program, conservation easements and what impacts these conservation measures have on property and individual taxes. Cathie will check on the availability of the Town Hall. Chris will make the flyer, Andie will organize a mailing to property owners with more than 25 acres of land and Ric will contact Amy Ashe-Nixon from the Caledonian Record. There was discussion whether we should place an ad and post information in the calendar of events as well, and if we should offer refreshments.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40, proposed by Cathie and seconded by Dave - all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathie Wheeler (for Susan Leskin who was absent)