

Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission
Meeting September 8, 2015
Approved Copy

In attendance for the FCC: Craig Heindel, Chair, Jen Cirillo,
John Medenwald, and Karen Pettersen, Secretary

Craig opened the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

The June meeting notes were moved to be accept as presented.

A. Brisson manure pit

1. There were more than 2 dozen people in attendance who had some interest in this issue, including a videographer from Breadbox Productions.
2. Craig told the audience he had emailed an explanation and two maps of the project to various parties in the audience, and generally described the design, location and permits. The maps indicate that the pit is not in a FEMA-mapped floodplain, and it is not in a state-mapped river corridor.
3. Craig stated that this commission is an advisory commission and not regulatory.
4. Several people from the audience spoke including Alan Brisson (owner of the manure pit), Matt Vogel (a neighbor), Anne Matthews and Ed Amirault (owners of Flower Power Farm/neighbors) Tim and Polly Mathewson (neighbors), Jason Farrell (interested person from Vergennes), Tanya Bashaw (neighbor), farmers and farm workers from Ferrisburgh, and other nearby towns and others whose names we didn't record.
5. Alan explained the reason for and functioning of the new pit, including the requirements for this pit from his large-farm operation to be in compliance with new state Agriculture Agency requirements, spread timing, fencing, entrances, whether the manure will be surface- spread or injected into the ground, and additives. He noted that the presence of this pit will not cause an increase in the amount of manure he applies to the nearby fields, since that amount is limited to the nutrient needs of the soils and crops. He has been applying manure to the nearby fields for several decades.
6. Commission members and neighbors asked some detailed questions about the manure spreading operation; Alan explained.
7. Matt and other neighbors asked if there were any requirements in the application processes for the relevant town and State permits regarding notification to the neighbors, and if not, what steps could be taken to remedy the apparent lack of abutters' notification. Conservation Commission members indicated that it was their understanding that the required notification processes had been followed, so if the neighbors were not happy with those processes, they should take their concerns to the authorities that established those processes. We suggested that the neighbors might start by approaching the Ferrisburgh boards regarding zoning review (Planning Commission, Zoning Board, Selectboard), and the State Agriculture Agency regarding state permits. The neighbors could also bring their concerns to our local legislators, since it is possible that the changes they are requesting might need changes in statutes.
8. Anne said the pit can be viewed from her house, and that at some times in the past the odor from the manure clung to her flowers for commercial sale, which resulted in a local store rejecting them. She would like to be notified when the manure will be spread.

9. The Commission discussed the possibility of hosting a forum, perhaps next winter, on the general state-wide topic of the conflicts between farming activities and residences, and between different types of farming. No definite decisions were made. Commission members agreed to make some exploratory inquiries of possible presenters-such as an attorney knowledgeable about the “right-to-farm” law (VT Law School?); Farm Bureau; Extension Service; Agriculture Agency; ANR; VNRC??.

B. Wildlife in Ferrisburgh Presentation – October 21st at 6:30 pm

1. Jens Hilke, VT Department of Fish and Wildlife Biologist, will make a presentation to the town at the request of the FCC in the Town Community Space. He will begin with an overview of wildlife in the State historically, then, explain what types of wildlife there are or could be expected in our town based on a number of ecological factors, what to expect in the future, and steps we could take to protect or encourage wildlife. He will also describe the Monkton salamander crossing, wildlife cameras in culverts, bobcat movement in Shelburne, and an update on the white nose syndrome in our dwindling bat population.
2. We will take care of the publicity, which will be similar to the Shoreland Protection, and Reptiles and Amphibian workshops. Suggestions for the workshop title include: “Wild Times in Ferrisburgh”, and “Ferrisburgh:Where the Wild Things Are”.

C. Shoreland Protection Workshop, July 6th

1. We had a good turnout of 16 people from our town and area towns at Kingsland Bay State Park. The field portion was extremely helpful in understanding how to calculate the number of trees and other types of vegetation that had to be preserved.

D. Solar Proposals

1. John saw wetland flags in the field where the extension of the existing solar array west of Route 7 and south of Monkton Road is proposed.
2. No new information on the other 2 solar projects.
3. There may be another solar array proposed for the eastern side of Town.

E. Vision Statement

1. Jen emailed the committee a collection of vision statements from other Conservation Commissions on May 21 for us to review.

F. Town Forest

1. We haven’t heard anything regarding the Laughlin property.
2. Karen walked to the south property line at the top of the ledge. Nothing has changed regarding the neighboring property to the south.
3. We agreed to send a letter to the Selectboard to reinforce our need to have clear ROW thru the Laughlin property to the Town Forest if after Carl Cole meets with the Conservation Commission on this topic.

G. Town Plan

1. The Planning Commission will hold a hearing on September 23rd at 6:30 regarding the draft Town Plan. Craig suggested that the Conservation Commission members send him their comments, if they are not able to attend this hearing
2. Look on the town website to review the newest version. There is a hyperlink for the Town Plan.
3. Craig asked Jens for his input on the wildlife section in our draft Town Plan. Craig will send him a link to the draft Town Plan.

H. Website

1. Karen to contact Betsy Etchells to add:
 - a. another item on the left sidebar labeled 'Upcoming Workshops'
 - b. remove 'interested in joining the FCC'
 - c. add Finn Yarbrough's name as a member of the committee
 - d. remove one of the 'meeting minutes' notations

I. New business

1. ANR Municipal Day. Craig will be attending several sessions, including the Lake Champlain TMDL (phosphorus budget). The draft TMDL includes requirements that towns work to reduce phosphorus input to the lake and tributary streams, starting with inventories of road drainage regarding their erosion potential.
2. Craig reported on the proposed High Voltage Power line through Ferrisburgh by Ambaric partnering with Nation Grid as explained by an Ambaric representative at the Selectboard meeting on 9/1/2015. The Ambaric rep outlined the proposed project as follows: The proposal is to install two high voltage direct current power lines from Cumberland Head, NY to Kingsland Bay, and continue on through Ferrisburgh to a converter station in New Haven where the lines would tie into the overhead grid. Everything will be below ground in Ferrisburgh in a trench that will be 4 feet deep and 2 feet wide. There will be 2 cables encased in concrete, and they will be bored under sensitive areas, such as wetlands or endangered species. Within the lake the line will lay on the bottom in water that is deeper than 150 feet. The line will be buried where the water depths are shallower than 150 feet deep. For an as-yet undetermined distance at the shoreline the lines will be bored. Direct current lines emit less radiation than alternating current lines. These lines will provide 800 MW (with 400 MW to be installed at first) to southern NE from new hydro and wind projects in upstate NY and Canada to satisfy the renewable energy source requests from southern New England states.

No other business was discussed and the meeting adjourned at 10:00pm. The next scheduled meeting is October 13, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Pettersen, Secretary