



Natural Resource Committee Meeting Minutes – May 15, 2014

Members Present:

Tom Young, Town of Litchfield
Jim Battis, Town of Hudson
Lincoln Geiger, Temple-Wilton Community Farm
Mike Croteau, Town of Litchfield
Venu Rao, Town of Hollis
Celeste Barr, Beaver Brook Association
Ron Miner, Merrimack Village District

Staff Present: Kim Goddu, Jen Czysz

The meeting convened at 3:05 PM

Natural Resources

K. Goddu started by stating that she would like to review the overall draft for general comments and committee members thoughts on big picture and priority issues and opportunities. Starting with the Land Use section, there were no concerns. J. Battis noted he thought it was very well written. K. Goddu noted that overall priorities within the region identified energy efficiency as the top priority and did a walkthrough of the various topics explored in the Natural Resources draft.

C. Barr noted that keeping an introduction to the National Flood Insurance Program was valuable since so many people still are not aware of the program and the importance of flood plains. J. Battis inquired about the table on conserved flood storage areas and how that was computed.

C. Barr, asked about the two brownfields sites that are mentioned in the draft as examples and would like to see additional detail on the two, perhaps just a paragraph that gives more context and examples of what could be for other sites.

The committee all preferred to see the detailed tables in line with the body of the text rather than as appendices. L. Geiger noted as a conservation commission member, having a catalogue of invasive species that are found in the region is very helpful. C. Barr noted that the examples provided at the beginning of the invasive species section gives good context on how invasive affect the region and examples of their insidious effects.

The various lists of resources for municipalities should all be aggregated and moved to the end of the chapter.

L. Geiger noted that the Farm and Ranch Protection Program through USDA has changed its funding criteria in NH in regards to what soils qualify. The program now includes a broader variety of soils eligible for funding when applying for land protection grants. There are substantial new opportunities for better funding of conservation easement grants.

. R. Miner noted that the Merrimack Agriculture Commission is looking to catalogue farms in the town. K. Goddu noted that the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Foods has maps of all farms by region available which would be a good resource for the Town to use in starting their efforts.

The committee noted that the section on strategies to promote agricultural preservation should be moved to the consolidated section on tools/resources for municipalities. Discussion on cost of preservation to the tax payers could be condensed and used as a basis and justification for the strategies.

L. Geiger noted that Wilton, through High Mowing School is looking to protect the 105 acres behind the Monadnock Mountain Spring Water Company that has significant steep slopes.

J. Battis noted that overall he felt the draft reads really well, there is a lot of information. His concern though is that given the length, he fears that only those that are most interested will read through the full length of the report. He is grappling with how do you get readers such as the selectmen to read it but not lose the data? Will there be an executive summary? V. Rao noted that he read it much like a text book and was excited to learn new information about the neighboring communities. It was noted that NRPC needs to determine what the key message is we want readers to walk away with.

K. Goddu asked what sections the committee members through were most interesting. Impervious surfaces was a big eye opener for many of the committee members and worthy of being highlighted. C. Barr noted those sections that show how the different towns compare to one another is helpful, the section on solid waste and recycling. T. Young found the section on wildlife and habitat was very interesting and informative. M. Croteau noted that there is a future opportunity on trout through a program where schools can sign up to participate in with NH Fish and Game and Trout Unlimited.

Water Infrastructure

K. Goddu walked through the Water Infrastructure section.

J. Battis noted that the Water Infrastructure Section states that there is no sewer in Hudson. This is somewhat inaccurate as there is a collection system that is neither a public or private system. (Percent of Population Served by Public Water, Public Sewer, Household Well and Private)

Again, the committee reiterated their feeling that there needs to be a real succinct communication of what the top issues are and where communities can take action. J. Cysz described the Telling the Story and Implementation Section.

J. Battis noted that one of the top issues that communities will be facing in the near future will be the new MS4 permit. Unfortunately, it will likely change. Perhaps it's presented as a strategy and

approached from the perspective that the smaller communities working together on their MS4 requirements would be more effective than trying to work separately. K. Goddu noted that she will be making future revisions to the chapter to shift sections and group opportunities and strategies.

Review of Potential Project Ideas

K. Goddu presented a preliminary list of draft project ideas that were developed based upon outreach results and past committee conversations. NRPC would like to expand the project lists to include projects that are representative of efforts municipalities are looking to undertake in their communities. J. Czysz noted that NRPC can confer Preferred Sustainability.

V. Rao noted that the Town of Hollis is looking to develop a park for the community. The local Rotary Club is working with the town to spearhead the project. Currently they are looking to supplement the funds that the Rotary is willing to contribute through grant funds and is in need of landscape architecture assistance.

C. Barr and M. Croteau talked about the possibility of continuing the salmon fish program with local schools. M. Croteau said he liked the culvert assessment project that NRPC recently completed and suggested building on it to focus more on a specific issue within the watersheds such as wildlife crossings. J. Battis noted that the Town of Hudson is very active in building upon its recreation infrastructure. He will talk to others in the town to see if there are possible ideas for projects.

K. Goddu asked about developing a regional agriculture initiative to work on implementing a farm to school program in schools in different communities. L. Geiger noted that working at the neighborhood level is a good opportunity for the future, allow communities to zoom in and see what opportunities there are to promote trails and recreation. C. Barr described the current project in Milford to map trail network connections.

V. Rao and L. Geiger talked about what communities can do to promote recreation and social gathering opportunities which always have a positive impact on communities. C. Barr suggests pocket parks are perfect gathering places for a neighborhood. L. Geiger described how in the absence of a neighborhood park, his farm becomes a gathering place and is often used by kids as a play space or gathering space. C. Barr talked about how current development patterns don't create neighborhoods. K. Goddu described some of the benefits of good neighborhood design as identified in the Milford Health Impact Assessment.

R. Minor asked if we had spoken to Farm Bureau and suggested that they have programs where they will visit schools. V. Rao suggested that creating more trails for bikes and pedestrians is very important. V. Rao also suggested that NRPC should visit each town when the regional plan is done to present the key findings.

Seeing no further comments the meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.