Natural Resources Committee
July 16, 2014 at 4:00 pm
Meeting Minutes

Attendance
Commissioners: Chair, Maggie Bartenhagen, John Whitman, Nick Bartenhagen, Andy Toepfer, and Lynette Hamilton
Staff: John Bennett and Kim Smith

Maggie Bartenhagen led the meeting and called the meeting to order at 4:05pm

1. Minutes
   - The minutes of April 16, 2014 Natural Resources Committee were approved by unanimous consensus (motion by John Whitman, second by Nick Bartenhagen).
   - The minutes of May 6, 2014 Natural Resources, Project Review, and Energy Committees were approved by unanimous consensus (motion by Nick Bartenhagen, second by John Whitman).

2. Potential educational/informational forums
   - Emerald ash borer: J. Bennett explained that Jolene Hamilton had inquired whether WRC would be interested in co-sponsoring a public workshop with WCNRCD on the emerald ash borer, focusing on how to address their imminent arrival to Vermont. The committee agreed to support the organization of this event. K. Smith will contact J. Hamilton about holding an event in the fall 2014.
   - Sustainable agriculture: Following up on previous Committee meetings, the Committee discussed the possibility of WRC co-sponsoring a forum or series of forums on sustainable agriculture. J. Bennett recommended that the Committee coordinate with the Community Development Committee which is discussing a similar initiative. Possible topics for forum discussion include regional status, entities involved in local agriculture, challenges faced, and potential opportunities for greater support. Other potential co-sponsors mentioned include Strolling of the Heifers, Farm-to-Plate, and state agriculture entities. K. Smith will coordinate with Susan McMahon.
   - Bees and Bats and Habitat: Following up on previous Committee meetings, the Committee would like to hold a public workshop to educate about opportunities and threats to bees and bats. The Committee is interested in an event that focuses on landscaping opportunities and the threats of purchasing plants with insecticides from
large distributors. The Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center (BEEC), the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, and state entities are potential co-sponsors/speakers.

- **Biomass:** The committee discussed having WRC co-sponsor a public forum to discuss the sustainability of biomass as an energy source and the implications of a possible expansion of biomass energy operations in the region. Possible co-sponsors/speakers include Biomass Energy Resource Center (BERC), VT Forestry Foundation, Northern Hardwoods, and Harvard Forest.

3. **Meeting day and time**
   - The Committee agreed to change the Natural Resources Committee meeting time to the second Wednesday of each month at 2:00pm, on the condition that this time accommodates Steve Skibniowsky’s schedule.

4. **Update on projects/issues**
   - **Stream Geomorphic Assessments:** River Corridor Management Plans are being developed for the Green River, Wardsboro Brook, and Winhall River.
   - **FERC relicensing:** The FERC will be considering a study for approval: “Northfield Mountain/Turners Falls Operations Impact on Existing Erosion and Potential Bank Instability” on the Connecticut River.
   - **ERP grant program applications issues:** Applications were not submitted because it was revealed late in the process that further stream geomorphic assessments would not be supported by the State River Scientist reviewing the applications.
   - **604b:** This year’s proposal for the 604b will be to provide WRC staff support to participate in the development of the Basin 11 Plan.
   - **Forest Stewardship project:** The WRC will work with two towns to determine whether the town’s land use regulations and town plan support or create barriers to forest stewardship practices.
   - **Green Infrastructure project:** The WRC is working with two towns to determine whether the town’s land use regulations and town plan support or create barriers to the implementation of low-impact development and green stormwater infrastructure. The Committee members suggested that workshops target road foreman.

5. **Other business**
   - **Shorelands Protection Act:** The Shorelands Protection Act was adopted by the Vermont Legislature and is in effect (as of July 1, 2014). This Act requires a permit for all new development or expansions within 250 feet of the mean water level on lakes 10 acres in size or greater. The Committee may be asked to submit comments during the 30-day public comment period on applications submitted.
   - **New staff member:** K. Smith will be taking over as staff of the Natural Resources Committee.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:04pm**

Respectfully submitted, Kim Smith