Windham Regional Commission Natural Resources Committee Minutes  
February 27, 2020

NRC Members Present: Lise Fortin (Chair), Linda Hecker, Susan Hammond, Bill Dunkel, Kevin Stine

CWAC Committee Members Present: None

Absent: Bob Anderson, Lynette Hamilton, Kathy Urffer, Everett Wilson, Michael Tuller, Andy Toepfer, John Whitman, Jim Pinkerton

Staff present: Margo Ghia

Public: None

Presenter: None

1. Call to Order
   - Meeting called to order at 5:03 p.m.
   - Updates to the Minutes from January 24, 2020 meeting.
     o Add (Chair) after Lise Fortin’s name
     o Correct spelling of Stine
     o Under Act 250 Updates, correct to say “Project Review, Planning Coordination and Transportation”
   - Action: Minutes from the January 24, 2020 meeting were approved with suggested updates, with a motion Susan Hammond, seconded by Bill Dunkel. Motion passed with an abstention from Kevin Stine.
   - Follow-up from previous minutes
     o Regional Plan update process will mainly focus on transportation and energy. However, Natural Resources will look for items that have changed or need to be updated in the land use and natural resources sections.
       ▪ At our next meeting we will want to address what kind of schedule do we want to follow and we will review what the committee has already worked on.
     o EAB Road Foreman’s meeting – Due to the transition in the Transportation Planner position at WRC, the EAB presentation at the road foreman’s meeting will be at a later time. Margo will continue to work with staff to keep that topic on the agenda for a future gathering.

2. Introductions & Welcome
3. Additions or Changes to the Agenda
   • Discuss the committee meeting schedule and the possibility of some phone meetings.

4. Committee Meetings
   • The committee discussed that there should always be an option to call into the meeting. If someone is interested in calling in, they need to let Margo know ahead of time so the conference call can be arranged.
   • Several comments were mentioned.
     o How about trying a video conference instead of phone conferences?
     o A concern about phone conferences is that it is hard to follow the conversation with so many people
   • A general feeling was that if an agenda was very light, then an occasional phone conference was ok.

5. Emerald Ash Borer
   • Several ideas were discussed as possible next steps for the committee to take regarding EAB
     o Field trip to an infested area
     o More workshops like the two that we offered
     o Organize a visit to Allard Lumber for landowners/foresters
     o Compile a document of what towns in our region are doing. What approaches are they taking after the inventory is complete?
     o There should be education for Selectboards
     o At the road foreman’s meeting, it should be mentioned that money should be built into the budgets
     o The Energy and Natural Resources Committee could brainstorm ways that Ash trees can be used after they are cut down (for example, a free firewood program in a community).
   • Follow up items:
     o As Town’s are revising their Town Plans, EAB threat and actions should be mentioned in the plan
     o As programs are being offered in the region, WRC could inform our network and be a connector between interested parties and resources that are available (like programs).
     o WRC should consider doing an EAB presentation at a full Commissioner meeting.

6. Green Mountain National Forest – Somerset IRP Environmental Analysis
   • Margo did a short presentation on the Somerset IRP and how the Environmental Analysis fits into the bigger picture of the IRP.
   • A few things that came up as areas of concern include
     o Grout Pond and the building of an access road all the way to the water’s edge
     o For such a quite area, there is a lot of cutting proposed. How will this impact the area and users/residents who visit or live nearby?
     o Bear habitat in Dover is a concern in the area of the proposed mountain bike trails, backcountry ski trails and the snow park.
   • Follow-up: Margo has contacted Jaclyn Comeau, a State bear biologist, to get her opinions about the possible environmental impacts to bears. If there is a concern from the State, the committee thinks it is important to observe critical bear habitat and to have a draft letter of
comment be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval as the Natural Resources Committee will not be meeting before the March 16th submission deadline.

- Any other comments to GMNF can be made as individuals.
- Presentation at upcoming Natural Resources Committee Meeting
  - The committee would like to hear the presentation at the Full Commission meeting first, then arrange to have a speaker from GMNF come in at the April meeting or later.

7. Act 250 Update Discussion
- As there are multiple committees interested in Act 250 updates, Chris Campany is the WRC representative monitoring the legislation.
- The Act 250 legislation is changing daily as it makes its way through the House. It is then expected that the Senate will also keep making changes. When the legislation comes out of the Senate, that may be the time to review.

8. Upcoming Events
- The Green River Watershed Alliance is actively working on a summer/fall program schedule.
- The Windham Connectivity Collaborative is also working on upcoming programs. The Listening/Visioning Sub-group is currently scheduling four Community Values Mapping sessions in the six towns in the identified North/South wildlife corridor that the group is primarily focused on.

10. Public Comment

11. Adjournment
- A motion was made to adjourn by Linda Hecker and seconded by Susan Hammond. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 6:43pm.
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