

## Shaftsbury Planning Commission

April 27, 2021

The meeting **came to order** remotely via the Zoom platform at 6:04 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Mike Foley, Martha Cornwell, and Naomi Miller. Also present was zoning administrator Shelly Stiles.

Mr. Foley moved to approve the **April 13 minutes**. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. Mr. Foley said he thought he wasn't the only one interested in exploring trails to the town forest. The amended minutes were approved 4-0-0.

Mr. Williams reported on a **hike to the Town forest** he, Mr. Foley, and Mike Cichanowski took on April 20. They uncovered a few possible routes, including a trail along a stream. They discovered that the top of the ridge is an ATV "highway," indicating there could be conflicts between users. He noted that the ATV use is illegal. A dog walker they met in the woods said the vehicles are numerous in the summer, and that the ridge trail goes all the way to Arlington.

Ms. Cornwell said ATV-ers might be willing to volunteer to maintain the trail

Mr. Foley said there could be no views created except in leaf-off season. He said the hike was more strenuous than, for example, the Robert Frost Trail, and would require a larger commitment of time and energy from would-be hikers. A flatter route would be a longer route.

Ms. Miller said she said it didn't sound like an outing that compared favorably to other "little hike" opportunities in the area.

Ms. Cornwall said families and young people like to hike to destinations. This doesn't seem like quite the right place. ATV use is an issue; if the town were to try to regulate it, it would become contentious.

Mr. Williams said he isn't ready to give up on the idea of trails to the town forest, but at the same time he doesn't have an answer as to how to proceed.

Mr. Foley said that, regarding **action issues outlined in the town plan**, those regarding the **trail around Lake Shaftsbury State Park** should be removed from consideration. The state will not be pursuing signage or possibly even improvements on the trail in the near future due to landowner issues.

Ms. Cornwell said she'd recently attended a meeting on new wastewater systems, especially in rural towns, and would like to revisit the concept of **providing wastewater treatment to S. Shaftsbury village**. She will get more information for the Commission. She said the presentation convinced her that, if framed right, village-based wastewater systems could be shown to be tools that could raise all boats.

Ms. Miller said that interest is keen among many constituents for a revitalization of S. Shaftsbury. Mr. Williams suggested Ms. Cornwell speak with Art Whitman, whose economic development committee commissioned an earlier study by Stone Environmental on a community wastewater system for the village.

Mr. Foley said there are many planning commissions across the state focusing on providing wastewater services to village centers that now lack them. VPR recently did a program on such efforts.

- Ms. Miller asked to **focus on reducing impacts of development on rural parts of town**, that is:
- The Town should encourage compact development where soil, topography, and other site conditions permit. Use Maps 4.1 and 4.2 (Terrestrial and Aquatic Systems) and (Rare Species and Natural Communities) when reviewing development proposals to minimize or avoid impacts, forest fragmentation and the creation of barriers for movement of species.
  - The Planning Commission should consider proposing a bylaw authorizing the Development Review Board to require developers to implement an open space design when failure to do so would result

in one or more of the following: 1. A significant reduction in the agricultural use potential of the land; 2. Degradation of the natural visual appeal of a hillside, ridgeline, or open field; 3. Encroachment upon an important natural or historic area, wildlife habitat, or a stream, wetland, vernal pool, or other water body; 4. Elimination of access to an important recreational resource; 5. Allowing excessive erosion, ground or surface water contamination, or otherwise endangering environmental quality. 6. Fragmentation of a significant forest resource.

Commission members voiced concern that climate change could cause an influx of new people to the state, and that the PC should be prepared for that growth in population. (It happened before, in the 1970s, for example.)

Mr. Foley suggested we ask Jim Sullivan or Michael Batchner from BCRC to visit to help us with devising language to implement the two goals outlined above. All thought it would be a good idea. Mr. Foley will reach out to Mr. Batchner.

Mr. Williams moved to adjourn at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Foley seconded the motion.

Notes by ZA Stiles