Starksboro Conservation Commission January Meeting

Monday, March. 23, 2026

Starksboro Public Library. 5:30 – 7 pm **Attending:** Alice Weston, Jan McCleery, Robert Turner, Jennifer Lovett, Margi Gregory, Dan Cusio (visitor, Planning Commission)

1. Approve February minutes

   Jan moves, Jen seconds, minutes approved.

2. Visitor's comments

   Dan shared to start meeting, member of the Planning Commission. Proposing that Conservation Commission would look at sections and provide comment. 3.1 (in the about section, talking about the natural setting of Starksboro). 4.8 Natural resources of the community section. 3,4 Community resources (natural resources subheadings). The need to incorporate Act 171. Timeline - survey closes on March 31st. After public comment, end of May is when writing the plan will need to start. Haven't decided yet if will be amendment or a re-adoption (with a few edits). Anticipate public comment hearing around increased housing opportunities, natural resource protection comment seems similar. A draft will be posted, with list of changes, with a public comment hearing within 15 days. If other significant changes are made, another hearing will be held. Changes are decided by PC by looking at comments and input, balancing input and the current plan. Discussion around the recreation overlay in the town forest, a part of the bylaws, and whether it should be in the plan as it is "land use". Question about the amount of effort we would put in, with the tight timeline, and not knowing if our input will impact the Planning Commission in making changes. Our role is advisory.

3. Presentation by Robert including discussion

   Presentation as a followup to last months discussion about Act 171.

   Reviewed required plan elements from state planning manual. Reviewed the 5 steps of development including community assessment and identifying common goals. Requirements for natural resources planning requires policies about protecting rare and irreplaceable natural resources. Discussion around the current 2018 Starksboro Town Plan. Chapter 3 - 3.1 Natural Setting. Discussion around the impact of the steep slopes on town plan. Discussed wildlife and

fisheries section. Information about habitats, and perhaps add information about Act 171. Maps could be added/improved. 3.4 Community Resources, natural, archeological/cultural. SCC input largely around working lands. Discussion around best management practices in forestry and timber harvesting. Discussion around how to best use SCC time/work to comment and provide information/data to the PC. Reviewed some of the indicators developed about 20 years ago through an SCC grant and discussed which we may want to get current data on. Looked at the data around Starksboro Forest Core. Reviewed different data and metrics categories the SCC could explore, either to provide input to PC around the plan. Economic, biologic, social.

4. Discussion. A summary of the environmental impacts of the bylaws and strategies for educating our community about those potential impacts.

Discussion around next steps of deciding what we want to prioritize and how to provide feedback. Presentation will be posted on town website in a couple days. Homework to read the town plan and become well versed.

5. Plan for incorporating Middlebury students into our spring invasive plant control.

   College proposed May 2nd for a crew of students to come and work at the Cota Lands. It's greenup day. We will do invasives work with the students, Margi will confirm timing.

6. Follow-up from February:
   a. Mowing along roads - have not been able to hear back from VTRANS around concerns around mowing timing. Will try calling as no response from emails.
   b. The local CC's radio program: Radio station update. The work is done out of the library. Will have kits for recording. Other towns have speakers, they will be recording the speakers. Discussion around challenge of recording outside. Discussion around doing shorter sessions rather than an hour.

c. The Municipal Planning Grant - got a final report which will be posted on the town website. Next phase is public engagement, focused on housing sections of the town plan.

7. Other

Meeting adjourned at 7:14