**Bethlehem Conservation Commission (BCC) meeting**

**January 11th, 2024**

**Working Meeting Minutes**

**Location:** Bethlehem Town Library

**Committee members present:** Ivan Ash, Margaret Gale, Cheryl Jensen, Chris Jensen, Rachelle Lyons, Betsey Phillips, Vivian Winterhoff

Cheryl called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

**The purpose of this working meeting was to establish the BCC’s priorities going forward for at least the next year to focus members’ (and alternates’) resources more effectively.**

There was overlap between members’ previously listed priorities as follows:

* Wetlands protection
* Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)
* Town Forest
* Improved connectivity w/ other bodies (town and otherwise)

**After discussion, BCC members agreed for priorities to be items that the BCC has sole responsibility for. Among these, it was decided to prioritize the following for 2024:**

* **Wetlands protection** (This is in reference specifically to the permit application review process: Standard Dredge and Fill = definite comments, Alteration of Terrain = optional comments)
* **NRI** (final report will be issued in December 2024)
* **Adopt-a-Spot program**
* **Town Master Plan contribution** (if relevant for 2024; this may start in 2025)

**Further discussion:**

**Adopt-a-Spot and Roadside Clean-up (anti-litter campaign)**

All agreed to put Roadside Clean-up on hold for this year and to prioritize Adopt-a-Spot.

Experimenting with greater communication around Adopt a Spot will start this month. Chris Jensen volunteered to be the coordinator for it.

Ideas for outreach and how to organize it:

* Include announcement in Chris’s Town newsletter and on various Facebook pages.
* One could focus publicity of the Adopt a Spot on critical/notoriously polluted areas when inviting people to participate.
* See how response is from individuals signing up first.
* Then reach out to organizations and local groups, e.g. Odd Fellows, Bethlehem Elementary School (BES), Woodland School, including those who have already been involved in the roadside clean-up.
* Encourage participants to give us updates regularly, e.g. before and after pics, photos of trash collected, number of bags etc. Adopt a Spot allows for more frequent roadside trash pick-up meaning that recycling rates can increase since discarded items won’t have been lying by the roadside for very long.
* BCC can make bags available at the Town Hall, where people can pick them up if needed. They can drop them off at Trudeau Rd whenever possible for them.
* Adop-a-Spot can be woven into publicity for the Town’s 250th anniversary year.

*Action:*

Vivian will share the Adopt a Spot information with Chris.

If BCC members know any roadside clean-up regulars, they can be contacted by individual members to get involved with Adopt a Spot if not already involved.

**Town Forest**
Address in 2025, once NRI has been completed. This will be included in the NRI this year, so there will be some involvement this year.

Some ideas were to organize some visits to the forest in the fall. Other questions included: Do we develop the trails and do we liaise with, for example, the Bethlehem Trails Association and enlist their help? Shall we appoint a BCC monitor of the Town Forest? A Town Forest monitor would monitor the property regularly and report to the BCC at least once per year on what’s happening there. Educational elements can be woven in with the Town Forest.

**Outreach, Communication and Education**
Discussion around how to implement educational activities to increase visibility, heighten awareness of the BCC, and provide general education about nature.

It would be sensible to liaise with other groups trying to reach the same audience and addressing same or related topics, e.g. coordinate with Transfer Station Committee to produce a joint newsletter?

Organize an event 2-3 times/year? UNH Cooperative Extension and NHACC have speaker lists that could provide ideas for potential guest speakers and topics. Recent Easton Conservation Commission speaker series on Saturdays were great. Could cooperate with ACT and other CCs, e.g. Carroll CC was interested. Also, Bretzfelder Park is a neighbor to the Town Forest.

*Action:*

**Rachelle will check in with Sue Greenlaw at BES to see what is happening at the school this year, given Sue’s retirement, also to see if there is interest in Adopt a Spot from the school.**

**BCC admin organization**

It was agreed that the mailbag list would no longer be done. Emails will be forwarded on as usual, and it will fall to each individual member to read the emails and take note of anything important.

Vivian would like to hand off monitoring emails and putting together and sending out the agenda when she has completed one year of this responsibility (this is soon – she will check).

Other NHACC members and the NHACC handbook have resources that could be helpful to us. See <https://www.nhacc.org/members/resource-library> for starters.

**Have FUN!**

The desire to have some light-hearted projects alongside the serious legal responsibilities was expressed. All agreed that we need to also have fun! In The NHACC handbook Chapter 4, which is about “Effective Conservation Commissions”, it actually states that “Effective Commissions Have Fun, and GET PEOPLE OUTSIDE!”

*Actions:*

Homework for each member to read the NHACC handbook! We have at least one copy available that members can take turns to borrow.

Vivian made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7.23pm. Motion seconded by Cheryl. Motion unanimously passed. Meeting adjourned at 7.23pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Vivian Winterhoff, Recording Secretary.*