

Guests: Ben Bradley, Paul Rump, Elmer Brown, Lilla Willey, John Stephens, Margaret Stephens, Sue Tallman

Members: Eric Pyle, Heather Carlos, Amy McElroy, Stephanie Carter, Ann Lavanway, Connie Snyder, Li Shen, Skip Sturman

Absent: Bob Pulaski

Li Shen welcomed everyone and introduced TCC members and discussed the Commission's role in conservation.

Skip Sturman, facilitator, explained the plan for the day and introduced the guests.

Crown Jewels

Ben Bradley – the waterways, when the water leaves Thetford it is no dirtier than when it arrives. Tells you a lot about the nature that is beside it, it is everywhere. Health, general cleanliness, not too many chemicals washing through.

Paul Rump – water and water fronts, streams, rivers, ponds, CT River, everything from Miller Pond on through. What really stood out when he first came here, the CT River was a cesspool in the 70's, it was frightening. He has watched it clean up over the years, particularly nuts over the Conte reservation from the North East Kingdom and down. What will be here when we are gone is clean water and access to water. You can swim in it now, jump off the bridges. But now access to Lake Fairlee, streams, river frontage is more restricted. Water frontage shoreline protections, riparian buffers need to be protected for clean water. He knows his valley well, and watches what happens to Barker Brook, is concerned about the junk that goes in it – mattresses, couches etc. They are all important, from the smallest stream to the CT. Conservation is not only about pickling things, preserving, it is also about using things wisely. Generating things, generating energy and doing it wisely. It is a system, places are going to change, be subject to all sorts of things we can't even predict.

Elmer Brown – when he came to town 43 years ago sewage was running right into the streams. Houghton Hill road and Mimi's trail. A.C. Hill, land north of Mud Pond. People are welcome to go up there anytime they want to. When they bought the land they gave a verbal agreement that they wouldn't develop it –AC Hill. Bought the land from Ken and Alice Bragg, someone was gonna buy just the top of the mountain. He mows it once a year, a good walking trail, he can still walk it at 82. Looks over Mud Pond, see the church, Ascutney, Pico, Killington. "We are going to leave it as it is, will leave it to the two kids." The other jewel is volunteerism. He has a book on the early history (early 60's) of this town, he was a member of the first fire squad.

Lilla Willey – She lives on one of the jewels because of the views to the east. The crown jewel she selected for this exercise is the property just south of her on Academy. Was owned by Oliver

Randall, now likely owned by daughter. Valuable because connected to state forest, then Lilla's land then next one down. Gives access for hunting, walking, skiing or whatever right down to the UV dam. Doesn't have a view, but would if the trees were cut. Fronts on Academy Rd., might back up to the Army Corps land. Very useful to residents of the town for recreation, access to Academy RD., State Forest.

John Stephens – hate to say anything nice about NH, but it is really important to the town, all the views to the east of the mountains. Elmer has done a fantastic job on his land. Views remind him of Glacial Lake Hitchcock when you can see the hills and peaks in the fog. The other obvious choice is Houghton Hill. Been used by the town for years.

Margaret Stephens – A.C. ridge, Houghton Hill, her place. Whenever she goes away, is so happy to come back to Thetford. Would like it to stay the same, but realizes nothing ever stays the same. Contiguous to Mimi's trail to Elmer's land and PegJack Forest. So silent at night, but can hear ravens (can hear their wings), turkeys, coyotes. Most of the land is open, recreation, lack of light pollution. Not many places where you can look up at the night sky.

Sue Tallman – lived on Sawnee Bean since 1972. Can see stars and light pollution from Hanover. Crown Jewel behind house – flora and fauna, need to start sharing with wild creatures in our town. People have a Disney view that animals can live with us, but they need huge areas to live in. Been lucky as not much development on Sawnee Bean. There is a huge hunk of land behind her house that a lot of people share, not sure who owns the land, likely several owners. Value is being undisturbed, wildlife corridor. We have enough access to land, only fair if we leave it for the wildlife. All these creatures have been getting kicked out.

Skip – asked what other people might say are important to them that are equally important as criteria that need to be conserved.

Sue – wetlands, didn't think about them being important but now through education, people are starting to understand that it is important.

Margaret – Halsey's wetland that he is trying to sell, not sure what will happen to it.

Paul – thinking of specific places, most amazing place to see the sky is junction of Sawnee Bean and Colby N. Cleared years ago by CCC, whole area has been kept open. Sawnee Bean cemetery is best placed to be dead. The entire open area, agrarian that Ken Doyle keeps open is quintessential Vermont setting. Great for watching meteor showers.

Elmer – if these lands are allowed to go back to nature, came in 1967, Bill Hill, eating supper would watch a whole hill of deer. Now can't see it at all.

John – Houghton Hill and Turnpike are a really important resource for the town. Biking, walking, running. Academy kids use it. Pomeroy's field is gorgeous.

Lilla – Is there a shortage of water in Thetford?

Ben – not yet

Elmer – the bogs hold the water.

Margaret – great to see the children go to the swampy area, great for education.

Skip – mixed landscape that we have makes Thetford a special place.

Elmer – I'm a skier, I don't use a snowmachine, before the trails they use to go across his land without permission, now since VAST and Snow Coasters they use the trails and don't abuse the privilege.

Ben – there is a specific of Thetford and then the general region. Guessing 75% of jobs in Upper Valley are in Norwich, Hanover, Lebanon, Hartford. We are a commuter town, to the extent that we restrict building here, it pushes them further out and it means they drive through the town. Be great to have advance transit go to Post Mills.

Elmer – they used to play baseball on Route 113.

---Break for snacks, criteria compilation---

Elmer left the meeting at the break.

Criteria

Clean Water - 3

Shoreline access

Water recreation

Wetlands - 2

Scenic Views - 1

High Elevation - 1

View of the Night Sky - 1

Public Access/Trails - 2

Recreation

Peace & Quiet - 1

Wildlife habitat/corridors -4

Connecting conserved lands - 1

Conserving large tracts - 1

Mixed landscape - 1

Volunteerism

Ben – would add human habitat to wildlife habitat

Lilla – maintaining farmland is also important

John – Ben brought up an interesting thing about this being a bedroom community, but can't keep up with farmland unless you are working the land.

Margaret – thinks it is wonderful that we have Cedar Circle and Crossroads – small farms.

Paul – could draw some into major categories.

- Clean water, shoreline access, water recreation, wetlands
- Scenic Views, High Elevation, View of the night sky
- Public access and recreation
- Conserving large tracts, mixed landscape, wildlife habitat/corridor, connection conserved lands

Skip – both of these sessions have been very informative. Like many of you, tends to think about high places and scenic views, but it is very clear that water is important.

Connie – impressive with how tuned in people are to the issues and to the town.

Linking Lands Alliance

Amy introduced LLA, a town effort with a main goal to establish important wildlife corridors and to look beyond the borders of the towns to and focus on the needs of animals. Everyone participating in a mapping project.

6:00 pm adjourned.