

SALISBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

AUGUST 3, 2023 – 6:00PM (VIA ZOOM)

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm.
2. Roll Call. Present: Maria Grace (Chair), Tom Blagden, Lee Potter, Susan Rand, Abby Conroy (Land Use Director) and Georgia Petry (Recording Secretary). Absent: Zach Sadow. In attendance: Curtis Rand and Michael Klemens.
3. **Approval of Agenda. So Moved** by S. Rand, seconded by T. Blagden and unanimously **Approved**.
4. **Approval of the Minutes 6/22/2023. Tabled** to next meeting.
5. Public Comment – None

6. Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Discussion

The chapters on Agriculture and Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) had been sent to the members. All previous comments had been incorporated into the Introduction. Michael Klemens noted that the June minutes had captured most of the discussion, including the split of the Economic and Natural Resource values.

Agriculture:

A. Conroy and M. Klemens would like to receive all comments by August 7th. With reference to examples, there will be boxes of case studies, such as the Bobolinks Project and Grasslands. M. Klemens pointed out that some of the language changes had been suggested by Zach Sadow and were incorporated. S. Rand mentioned there had been blasting in a snake habitat on Belgo Road; A. Conroy indicated there was not a lot of discretion regarding existing lots and regular zoning permits. She added that there is no way to deny people developing lots; there is only the NDDB.

Natural Resource Values:

L. Potter asked for an explanation of PA-490; M. Klemens explained that it is a tax deduction that is good for 10 years and noted that Conservation easements are more powerful. He pointed out that Conservation easements and PA-490 can work in tandem, reducing both Federal and Local taxes. L. Potter asked about the purpose of the POCD. M. Klemens indicated that it is primarily a guide for the Town government, which gives strategies “teeth”; and that it is very important to align problems with strategies. The secondary purpose is to educate the public. A. Conroy pointed out that over 50% of Town land is in PA-490; L. Potter asked if the goal is clear to have 50% of Salisbury be open land. M. Klemens asked what the Conservation Commission goal is and noted that Salisbury may be at approximately 75% now, but the qualitative aspect of having

certain specific habitats and their protection is important. He M. out that most of the PA-490 land is “working landscapes” such as farms or forested land, not open space, which is very tiny. M. Grace gave the following data from the NRI (based on the Oct. 2022 Grand List): 2,890 acres in open space; 13,256 acres in forest; 4,500 acres in farmland. M. Klemens pointed out that PA-490 is not a big conservation tool, per se. M. Klemens and A. Conroy commented that old subdivisions can’t be regulated as they would be now, such as for tax purposes, and the multiple benefits they received from being under PA-490. M. Klemens talked about the natural resource value of lands and noted that there will be a case study box of the Bobolink Project. T. Blagden commented on the document encouraging alternative enterprises; A. Conroy indicated that Zoning would be the mechanism to apply for permits. (Note: at this time, S. Rand left the meeting.) M. Klemens and A. Conroy talked about having agricultural enterprise zones and the need to establish guidelines, regarding zoning permits and considering concerns of neighbors. Strategies:

- 1) Consider adopting a right to farm ordinance.
- 2) Continue to promote and encourage the PA-490 program.
- 3) Consider placing more land into deed restricted conservation easements.
- 4) Consider developing zoning regulations to allow a variety of alternative operations on farm land to help keep farming economically viable.
 - a. Expand accessory uses
 - b. Encourage Agritourism to diversify and sustain farms
 - c. Investigate the possibility of an Agricultural Overlay District (Adopted by the PZC and Public Hearing process)
- 5) Promote working landscapes as a method of natural resource conservation.
- 6) Broaden community interest in sustaining farms.
- 7) Encourage Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

There was discussion about including language about how climate change is affecting farms.

Natural resources, wetlands and conservation:

M. Grace commented that she had not addressed “historic resources” recently; a lot of questions remain unanswered. M. Klemens and A. Conroy suggested having historic resources in either the Vibrant Villages or Infrastructure section, instead of this section.

M. Klemens noted that additional data will be added to the Inventory and Assessment section, including recent development and subdivision activity.

M. Grace asked about the format of putting the threats before the resources. M. Klemens, A. Conroy and M. Grace agreed that the order should be reversed, with putting the resources first. All of the descriptive text was reviewed, paragraph by paragraph. M. Klemens explained that this is an educational document. T. Blagden asked about how subsidized species are defined; M. Klemens explained that those species develop a competitive edge through introduction, eliminating predators, creating an edge because they are human-caused problems that are disrupting the ecosystem.

M. Grace suggested having another box, “Follow the Forest Initiative – HVA”, as a case study to be added.

There was brief discussion about the management of forests (silviculture), as a land use practice.
Strategies:

A new item will be added about landscaper education – forest management, invasives and native plants. Additional language will be added.

There was brief discussion about groundwater withdrawals and problems that can be created. M. Grace asked to add a reference to the HVA Culvert Report (2017) and suggested contacting HVA about watershed plans, as well. She also talked about the availability of Federal programs, such as the NRCS Equip program, for agriculture/farms and improving habitats.
(At this time, T. Blagden left the meeting)

7. Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) Discussion

M. Grace, M. Klemens and A. Conroy will meet to discuss further.

8. Knotweed Survey Discussion

M. Grace asked if the Town would be willing to address knotweed issues on Town property, such as along the Rail Trail. The discussion may be continued at another meeting.

9. H.V.R.H.S. Discussion

L. Potter talked about possibly meeting with the FFA teachers in September, regarding having students help with the NRI Agriculture section or the POCD section on landscapers' education.

Adjournment. So Moved and unanimously Approved.