

Westmoreland Conservation Commission
Minutes, February 6, 2020

Present: Marshall Patmos (Chair), April Ferguson, Jean Rudolph, Perry Sawyer, Dick Schmidt, John Snowdon (guest)

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM.

The minutes of the January meeting were approved as submitted.

John Snowdon, Associate Supervisor of the Conservation District, discussed bank erosion along the Connecticut River caused by daily changes in water level due to hydroelectric operations at Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon dams. Now is a critical time in their federal 40-year relicensing to address this matter, as licensee Great River Hydro has not done so. In her recent letter, Kathy Urffer of the Connecticut River Conservancy calls for the impacted riverside towns to pass a resolution on this concern at Town Meeting and submit that resolution to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission; suggested language for the submittal was provided. This suggested letter addresses dam operations, monitoring, and a commitment by Great River Hydro to fund riverbank restoration and related damages.

This concern was discussed, noting a significant loss of the back yard of a house on Ferry Road and other observations. Funding mechanisms were discussed. To get more information, John Snowdon will contact Kathy Urffer to discuss her possible attendance at our next meeting and a possible multi-town meeting with stakeholders including towns, river groups and Great River Hydro. Perry will be attending a Conservancy meeting and might be able to speak with her also.

Dick Schmidt distributed copies of the New York Times 1/22/20 article "Trump Removes Pollution Controls on Streams and Wetlands", as this is directly contrary to the purpose of the Conservation Commission. Nearly 100 environmental laws are being repealed/weakened relative to farming, real estate development, climate change, clean water, clean air, chemical pollution, coal mining, oil drilling, and endangered species protections. The article says that drinking water for millions of Americans would be put at risk due to unregulated pollution. The possible effect on state environmental laws was discussed.

Town Ordinances were discussed relative to farming and roadside stands, concluding that the Commission will not seek changes at this time but will monitor and recommend modifications if there is a need to keep the town agriculture friendly.

The next WCC meeting will be held at 8:30 AM on Thursday, March 5, 2020 at Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 AM.

Submitted by Richard Schmidt