

Topsfield Conservation Commission

Meeting of August 12, 2009

Minutes of the TCC Workshop Meeting held on Aug. 12th, 2009

Attending the meeting: George Hall, Jud Pratt, Jim McDougall, Holger Luther. There were no visitors, and no regulatory action was considered at that meeting. The meeting was held at the Topsfield Town Hall Conference Room.

Chairman Hall opened the meeting at 7:20. There was no formal agenda prepared. Jud indicated that he would like to discuss an amendment to the General Wetlands Bylaw (GWB) that would remove the definition of “intermittent stream” out of the section of “Bodies under Open Water. He believes that an intermittent stream should be treated differently than the other resource areas. The streambed requires protection as it indicates flowing water during heavy rains, but it does by itself not require the usual 100-foot buffer zone. There was general agreement with that proposal, but no action was taken to formulate language for an amendment.

The next topic of discussion was the General Administrator’s permit for work that has an essentially negligible impact on resource areas. Holger provided a first draft of criteria for such work and/or sites. The issue of whether the area must be degraded and if dead trees may be cut in just the worksite or in the buffer zone general was discussed. There was agreement on the taking down dead or diseased trees that present a danger to homeowners. Beyond that Holger defended the notion that dead trees in wetlands are a source of habitat for birds and other wildlife and therefore should not be cut unless they do present a threat. The question of limiting the permit to just the first 50 feet or open it up for the entire buffer was raised. Mark and Jud favored opening up the entire buffer. The discussion ended with Jim agreeing to send an annotated copy of the draft to everyone.

George took up the discussion of the quality of buffer zone with an eye towards amending the GWB such that the TCC need not have to waive its regulations on a case-by-case basis. Jim mentioned that vernal pools need the largest buffer (1,500’) as these are the highest quality habitat for a great variety of wildlife. Previously degraded buffer zones were considered the least effective. Beyond that nothing specific emerged from the discussion.

All agreed to continue the discussion however. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20.

Respectfully submitted:

Holger

Holger Luther