

Pomfret Planning Commission

Meeting 2/19/2024 7 pm.

Pomfret, VT.

Approved 3/4/2024

Present: Bill Emmons, Doug Tuthill, Tyler Wellington, Nelson Lamson, John Moore, Jack Pearson, Karen Hewitt Osnoe, ZA

Absent: Cy Benoit,

Guests: none

Call To Order/Agenda Changes/Public Comment:

Bill Emmons, chair, called the Planning Commission meeting at 7:05pm

Public Comment. None.

Nelson moved and Doug 2nd to approve the minutes of 2/05/2024. Motion carried.

Karen reported on the continuation of the ZBA hearing on February 29th at 6 pm. for Abracadabra Coffee.

We reviewed Chapters 2 and 3 of the Draft updated Town Plan. Thanks to Jack for updating the Population of Pomfret graph. Thanks to Tyler for updating the draft changes.

A motion was made by Doug Tuthill and 2nd by Nelson Lamson to have Bill Emmons request TRORC that its update of the Regional Plan refers and maps only the government owned lands, the Appalachian trail, as Pomfret's Forest block and wildlife corridor. Motion unanimously passed. See attached.

The Commission broke into Executive Session. to discuss Karen Hewitt Osnoe ZA position. We ended the Executive Session.

The commission unanimously agreed to recommend to the Selectboard Karen Hewitt Osnoe to be appointed to continue her service as Pomfret's Zoning Administrator. The commission thanked Karen for her excellent service since 2017. The commission understands that to accommodate Karen she will need either access to the permit files in the vault outside of business hours or some periodic assistance.

Next meeting March 4th 2024, at 7 pm.

Meeting adjourned 8:55p.m.

Pomfret's decision on its forested areas:

Background:

Its important we know the background of Forest Blocks and Wildlife Corridors/Habitat Connectors and Forest Fragmentation including the definitions noted below. . Casually referring to these terms in our Town Plan could be confusing Pomfret's intent.

Some areas in Vermont lie in a large flat plateau, such as Burlington, and have experienced significant development resulting in forest fragmentation. As a result of forest fragmentation, the State of Vermont has decided to map out Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectors/Wildlife Corridors statewide using the same brush as what might be needed in Burlington. From the definition the main criteria was land not yet been developed. Furthermore land was mapped out without any participation with those most effected.

Pomfret's Landmass:

Seventy years ago, Pomfret was about 80% open land and 20% forested...Most of the hilltop pastures used for summering dairy heifers have become overgrown due to the demise of the many small dairy

farmers that occupied the town. Most of these hilltops are too steep to have a tractor till the land.

Today Pomfret's landmass, 25,280 acres, is predominately forested with occasional open meadows that are hay land, pasture- land, or fallow land. In Pomfret we see some minor forest fragmentation due to our limited development while at the same time the forests are creeping into the meadows, so net effect is insignificant.

Out of the 25,280 acres 18,664 acres ,74%, of the land is in current use. This may not be a permanent conservation guarantee; however, it reflects the owner's desire to maintain agricultural and forest land using the state's Best Management Practices while leaving land undeveloped.

There are 6,400 acres or 25% of the lands conserved by the Upper Valley Land Trust or The Vermont Land Trust. These conserved lands were a voluntary donation of land rights and benefits received.

In total 50% of Pomfret's land is steep slopes greater than 20%. These steep hillsides, found throughout the town, have remained a barrier to development while providing natural habitat for wildlife.

So between the current use lands, the conserved lands, and the steep slopes we believe that there are sufficient open and forested lands for the wildlife to travel at their pleasure. In fact, the deer have no problem feeding on the vegetation and fruit near homes and in orchards.

In Pomfret There is no justification to map out any specific areas for the sole purpose of wildlife corridors and forest blocks. It would be discriminatory at best. Pomfret land is predominately forested and will remain so considering 50% of the land mass is steep slopes.

To conform to the state guidelines we agree to map only the government owned lands, the Appalachian trail, and define it as a forest block and Wildlife Corridor. We request the regional planning commission to edit their regional maps to conform with Pomfret's Map ID. XXXX.

Pomfret has a remarkable history of land protection. In the early 1970's, the Quechee Lakes Development Corporation began plans to enlarge their holdings with the purchase of a large parcel surrounding the Joe Ranger Road. This large-scale development project was thwarted by concerned and enlightened selectboard members and citizens by initiating zoning that would only allow development within the town's regulation. Today Pomfret's Subdivision Regulation adopted in 2012 together with Pomfret's Zoning Ordinance, which includes the Ridgeline and Hillside Conservation Area, adopted in 2020 is sufficient regulation to achieve smart growth.

Notes:

Forest Fragmentation *(The division or conversion of a forest block by land development other than by recreational trail or use exempt under subsection 4413(d) of Title 24.*

Forest Blocks: *(A contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession and not currently developed for non-forest use. A forest block may include recreational trails, wetlands, or other natural features that do not themselves possess tree cover and uses exempt for regulation under subsection 4413(d) of Title 24).*

Habitat Connectors/Wildlife Corridors. *Land or water, or both, that links patches of wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. A habitat connector may include recreational trails and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of Title 24 VSA*

Submitted:

John Moore, Clerk

