**Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 5 pm**

Zoom Meeting (due to COVID 19)

Attendees: Thomas Minogue, Sharon Minogue, Ralph Topham, Nancy Hathaway, Heather Richard, Sue Sokol, Lucy Leaf, Irene Schmidt, George Borowsky, Chris Stark

**Minutes of last meeting - approved**

**Status of Community Solar in Surry – Irene Schmidt**In Surry, all solar projects, home/business, including town office or school, would need prior approval from Versant if they are hooked up to the grid. The Surry substation must have the capacity to control voltage fed into the system from solar panels.

Currently, the large-scale Borrego Solar Project, approved by the Planning Board on 6/24/20  - Route 172 west of Contention Cove, would limit future residential and commercial solar installations. According to Versant’s Manager of Regulatory Support and Market Based Solutions, Dave Norman, the Borrego Solar Project would use up the additional capacity (25MW would remain) of the Surry Substation and would not allow connection of other solar, whether residential or commercial. There are no plans by Versant to upgrade the Surry Substation transformer, which is currently in good shape, an upgrade would be at least 5-10 years from now, and is estimated to cost between $1-2 million.

The Surry Substation services almost all of Surry, with the exception of a very small area fed by Ellsworth. It also covers a part of Blue Hill along Routes 172 and 176.

Irene mentioned that, there are other ways Surry residents could have a positive impact in addressing climate change and lowering their energy bills such as replacing incandescent lights with LEDs (80& less energy and CO2 emmissions), weatherizing homes (Windowdressers Program in Surry helping people to insulate windows-estimated to save $27 per window a year), wood stoves meeting EPA standards (77% less particulates), and other technological developments – (battery backup for electric cars, other alternative energy).

**Climate Mitigation**

A discussion about the best ways to approach climate change was discussed. Some ideas included: Forming a Climate Action Commission Maine Climate Action Plan like Blue Hill is doing, looking at Ellsworth’s Green Plan or developing Conservation Commission Ordinance. Heather pointed out that resources that will come from the state will first go to those towns that have an organized plan. There was some discussion about having an energy survey and possibly sharing the idea at the Surry meeting on April 10th.

**Carrying Place Erosion** was also mentioned Tom said that the Surry Road Commissioner is aware of the Carrying Place erosion and has submitted a budget to the town for the prevention of further erosion.

The Conservation Commission requested that Tom share some of this information above with the Planning Board.

**Water Monitoring Update + Green Crabs – Heather Richard, Shaw Institute**

Heather shared the following:

**Bacteria Monitoring** (with input from Dr. Orin Shanks, EPA)

* Weekly Sampling mid-May-October
* 8 monitoring stations / shoreline surveys
* Archiving samples for MST- $5 per test
* Documenting precipitation and tidal stage
* Consistent Monitoring: Flood and Patten Outlets, Wharf, Union River, Abenaki Ln, Contention Cove (OBD sites) and 1 Under Canvas site. 1-2 tests per week extra based on stormwater flow and test results.

**Opening up Flats** –

* Overboard Discharge (OBD) permits in Contention Cove
* Ellsworth WWTP dilution zone reassessment: based on current output vs permitted output
* Retention time in upper bay/Union River contribution
* What Surry decided to do in terms of shellfish surveys and marine resource studies might depend on opening potential.

-A brief discussion about how shellfish permitting would be difficult to achieve with flooding and potential fecal pollution from OBD sites and Ellsworth Water Treatment Plant. Tom said that he will be talking to the Code Enforcement Officer, Tim Ferrell about the 2 OBD licenses he will be renewing to address how to eliminate this problem in the future.

**Marine Resources**

* Shellfish Surveys – Hannah Annis preliminary Data to be sent soon- high biodiversity, oyster population explosion
* Have SOP for shellfish surveys, need special permit for closed areas. Could be interesting along with green crab data.

**Possible Education and Outreach**

* Citizen Science Surveys- soft mud is bad
* Partnering with Pemetic Sea Farm, Linda Greenlaw, Under Canvas maybe others
* More formal education program grant with a touch tank
* Potential future SI intern focused on education and outreach
* Must be accessible and beneficial for Surry Community and residents, not just UC.

**Green Crab discussion:**

Heather said that trapping green crabs wouldn’t impact population density, warming ocean temperatures will likely lead to more green crabs wintering over, baiting traps lures more crabs to an area, and a plan of what to do with the dead crabs would need to be decided in advance. She said that the information would be useful scientifically speaking.  Heather said weekly surveys could be conducted, possibly by volunteers as “Citizen Science Surveys” in 3 areas – Town Wharf, Poignant Point, and Under Canvas by using predator exclusion boxes( ? ) or studying what one can dig up in a one meter grid.  She also said that Shaw Institute would not be conducting those studies but has green crab traps to lend. Shellfish surveys could be conducted on a voluntary basis with special permits. Heather & Ralph would meet and discuss possible next steps.  
<https://www.anecdata.org/projects/view/780>

<https://www.manomet.org/project/green-crab-research/>

**Update on the Conservation Commission Ordinance - re: properties/areas of natural interest - Lucy Leaf**Following up on last month’s question about the portion of the ordinance that said the Conservation Commission would “keep and index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned” actually means. Lucy had contacted the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions and learned that creating an index of open space does come straight out of the state statute, and the law, from 1987 is also posted in their Manual for Conservation Commissions. Lucy said she would forward the CC manual link to the commission. The manual defines open space, how to create and index and why it is helpful to have areas of interest identified for the future.

**Culvert Work on Goldstream Road/Toddy Pond Road and bordering BHHT land – grants – Lucy Leaf**Lucy contacted Scott Craig, Fisheries Specialist at the Orland Hatchery to determine if alewives migrated up Gold Stream. She learned that his in not an area alewives migrate to, and therefore, this could not be a basis for receiving grant fund as the town was exploring. Lucy mentioned that it is a habitat for many other wildlife and borders Blue Hill Heritage Trust (BHHT) property. Lucy contacted BHHT about it and they will check on the status of the dam there. In talking to residents, Lucy said that the dam is in good shape and should be protected from any damage when doing culvert work there. The last Board of Selectman meeting the SB said they would have the culvered repaired before the end of the fiscal year. Tom said he would bring up culvert repair at the Planning Board meeting to see if the town could secure a grant for its repair.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, April 29, 4:30 pm, Zoom – (Agenda/Meeting site to be sent by 4/22)**

-Chris Stark, secretary