

Salisbury Planning Commission
Minutes of the February 9, 2021 Meeting – DRAFT

Members present: Ariell Slater, Barrie Bailey, Morgan Cate, Deb Brighton
Also present: Jens Hilke, Amy Clapp, Jim Andrews, Katie Raycroft-Mayer

Ariell called the meeting to order at 7:06, and turned the meeting over to Jens Hilke, from Vermont Fish and Wildlife, who gave advice on planning for an ecologically functional landscape. A copy of his slide presentation is attached, and a [recording](#) of the meeting can be found here.

Jens compared Salisbury's current plan and zoning regulations with maps showing areas that are high priority for protection according to the Agency of Natural Resources. He found that there was general agreement with one notable exception: the area near the school and Holman Road. It is designated as a growth area, but it is the habitat of threatened and endangered bat species. This is exactly the conflict that we hoped to resolve with the planning grant. While the ACRPC had indicated that this area could probably still be considered for growth, Jens didn't seem to agree. He felt that there would be "substantial conflict" and that continuing to designate this area as open to growth would create regulatory problems as it would indicate that it was a good site for development but it would actually be very difficult to actually issue a permit.

Jim Andrews suggested we eliminate (not replace) the growth area in the town plan, and aim for steady state.

Since the habitat area delineated on the state map is a perfect circle, Morgan asked what the boundaries of the habitat area actually are. Jens indicated that they didn't know exactly, but it was likely to be larger than the circle. Morgan asked if a developer could undertake the inventory of roost trees to determine which areas within the circle would be permissible, and Jens agreed that they could.

Jens also noted that the town zoning maps don't necessarily provide for west-east travel corridors and suggested we look at providing that. He also pointed out some vague language in our zoning regulations that should be clarified. He agreed to send us some links to plans and regulations in other towns.

Jens noted that Act 171 does not require prohibiting development in forest blocks; it calls for identifying those areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and planning for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests. He also explained that the flood hazard overlay zones, wetlands, and riparian buffers all serve to promote connectivity.

Jens closed by mentioning the "incredible diversity" in our town. He said it is "astounding how many rare species Salisbury has."

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:38.

Submitted by Deb Brighton