

Conway Conservation Commission Minutes
August 17, 2023, 7 p.m., Town Hall

Present for the Conservation Commission: Grace Larson, Chair; Tony Somers, Louise Beckett, Brittany Nickerson.

Others Present: George Forcier (Chair, Planning Board); Joe Strzegowski (Associate member of Planning Board); Bill Moebius (Planning Board); Jodie Lally (Sustainability Committee); Kimberly MacPhee (FRCOG - Franklin Regional Council of Governments); Mark Silverman (Chair, Zoning Board of Appeals).

Grace opened the meeting at 7:05.

Presentation from Kimberly MacPhee, of FRCOG about River Overlay Corridor District

Notes from presentation:

Flood plain bylaw was adapted by the town to comply with requirements of national flood insurance. This bylaw is the minimum regulation required to maintaining compliance with national flood insurance.

The town can also take on a River Corridor Overlay District. A River Corridor Overlay District is larger than the 100-year flood zone/plain that the flood bylaw recognizes. The River Corridor Overlay District is considered important because rivers needs room to move across the landscape – they will meander, erode its bank, deposit sediment, etc. When a river corridor is being delineated by a river scientist, they look at historic mapping, flooding, damming, existing boundaries and constraints human-made or otherwise (high glacial terrace). The creation of the River Corridor Overlay District as presented tonight is being funded by MEMA (MA Emergency Management Area). It was mapped by Fluvial Geomorphologists using VT protocol (VT natural resources has been doing this type of mapping for several decades). Grounded in proven science and a proven methodology.

The River Corridor Overlay District is a digital layer, mapped in GIS software. Can be displayed in Google earth.

Differences between Floodplain bylaws and River Corridor Overlay District protections/precautions:

Flooding has two hazards, rises over land – bathtub phenomena.

Fluvial erosion hazards – erosion and damage that comes from water moving over the landscape.

In Conway because the South River has historically been so manipulated (dammed and straightened) it is now disconnected from its floodplain. Large rains bring lots of erosion.

Floodplain bylaws only apply to bathtub phenomena.

400 acres of land in town that would be under jurisdiction of River Corridor Overlay District but

not in 100-year flood plain. Town would be getting a management area that is currently not protected in terms of usage. Con. Com. Regulates activities, Zoning regulates uses. Increasing the overlay zone offers protections and benefits to environment, infrastructure, public safety.

Wetlands Protection Act is concerned with the 200 foot buffer zone. River Corridor Overlay District takes into account the landscape and water patterns and behaviors.

River Corridor Overlay District rates corridor sensitivity which delineates the extent to which encroachment in certain areas will increase severity of flood events. For example, in a very sensitive area, a small amount of encroachment will have a severe consequence.

Primary goals of River Corridor Overlay District - keeping new infrastructure out of harm's way and keeping further encroachment in hazard zones.

Next Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 22, 2023, at 6 p.m. at Town Hall.

At 8:50 p.m. on a motion from Grace to close the meeting, Brittany seconded, all said aye and the vote was unanimous in favor.