

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 19 November 2008
Conference B, Beck Building
MINUTES

Members present: Robert Dahn, Peter Drzewiecki, Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, John Silander. *Members absent:* Joan Stevenson, Frank Trainor.

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:37p by Chair Quentin Kessel.
2. The draft **minutes of the 15 October 08 meeting** were approved as written.
3. **Proposed Sustainability Committee.** The Town Council is considering a resolution establishing a permanent Sustainability Committee “charged with maintaining a general overview of the sustainability of the Town.” Sustainability is an imprecise notion, and it is not clear to the Commission just what this Committee would do and how its concerns would intersect those of the Commission. If the resolution is adopted, the Commission would appreciate having some input on the selection of the member who is to “represent environmental protection.”
4. **2009 meeting dates.** As in the past, the Commission will meet in 2009 on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:30p in Conference B. (The draft schedule included in the packet has the correct dates, but indicates incorrectly that they correspond to the 1st Wednesday and that meetings will be held at 7:00p in the Council Chambers.)
5. **CL&P Interstate Reliability Project.** Kessel attended CL&P’s presentation at the Mansfield Community Center on 22 October and a special Town Council meeting on 10 November regarding CL&P’s proposal to add another column of poles & high voltage lines to its right-of-way through NE Connecticut. He reported that questions submitted to CL&P by Town Planner Greg Padick incorporated issues raised by the Commission in its comment (attached), but that CL&P’s general position is that all issues have been satisfactorily addressed somewhere in its massive filing. Council members spoke against the proposal on 10 November. The Town will attempt to interest other towns in having the Windham Council of Governments file as an intervener in proceedings before the Connecticut Siting Council.
6. **UConn composting facility.** Earlier in the evening, Kessel attended UConn’s information session on its proposed composting facility, which is designed to address concerns about runoff from spreading fresh manure generated by university farm animals on its agricultural fields. He reported that Chuck’s Steak House was worried about possible odors from the facility, were it to be located at the site that is (of those under consideration) closest to the business.

7. Open space recommendations. After hearing from Kessel (in a lengthy executive session) about proposals from the Open Space Preservation Committee, the Commission agreed (motion: Lehmann, Drzewiecki; all in favor save Dahn, who abstained) to authorize the Chair to write a letter to the Town Council supporting the recommendations of the Open Space Preservation Committee that the Town purchase, for open space, those parcels that will be the subject of a public hearing before the Council on 8 December.

8. IWA referral W1418 (Town of Mansfield; Maple, Davis, & Spring Hill Rds.) The proposal is to construct a natural gas line from an existing line at the junction of Silo & Maple Rds. to the Middle School, via Maple, Davis, and Spring Hill Roads. The pipeline would supply fuel for a new heating system at the Middle School; it would be buried in a trench under the roadways. Davis Rd. passes over and near some small wetlands, but the proposed project does not appear to add to whatever wetland impact the road already has. The Commission unanimously agreed (motion: Lehmann, Dahn) that no significant impact on wetlands is to be expected from this project, as long as standard erosion controls are employed during construction.

6. Adjourned at 9:07p.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary
20 November 08; approved 17 December 08

Attachment: Commission comment on CL&P Interstate Reliability Project

TO: MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: MANSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
SUBJECT: NEEWS/CL&P MUNICIPAL CONSULTATION FILING
CC: GREG PADICK
DATE: OCTOBER 16, 2008, REVISED OCTOBER 23, 2008

The Mansfield Conservation Commission has reviewed the NEEWS/CL&P Municipal Consultation Filing Concerning the Connecticut Portion of the Interstate Reliability Project, Volumes 1-5, dated August, 2008. We recommend that the Town of Mansfield support either Option C-1 or C-2, as opposed to the Option A, which would pass through the Town of Mansfield. If appropriate, we suggest that the Town of Mansfield apply for intervener status on this CL&P application. Our reasons are as follows:

1. The project appears to hold little benefit for Mansfield or NE Connecticut, much of Mansfield's power originates from the Millstone Point plants to the south of Mansfield. A second line might increase the reliability of the service in northeast (NE) CT; however, the additional capacity the proposed new lines will provide is mostly destined for areas west of Mansfield, including Fairfield County.
2. The CL&P presentations for NE CT show in great and extensive detail the route chosen by the utilities in 2006. As the title of the document suggests, the "Connecticut

Portion" is heavily emphasized. It is only when you get to the 25th document in Volume 4 (Supplemental Documents by Other Agencies), SD.25, "Solution Report for the Interstate Reliability Project," that Option A, passing through Mansfield, had significant competition. One, apparently paralleling the Mass. Pike before heading in the southerly direction (Option C-2) is equivalent, or better, in many respects. One has to sort through approximately 18 inches of paper to discover this.

3. The two alternate routes, C-1 and C-2, would avoid Mansfield and the resulting damage to our residential and public recreation areas, forests, and farmlands. The initial costs for these C-routes are comparable to Option A, through Mansfield. In the long term, they might be less expensive for CL&P: their proximity to interstate highways might provide for easier, and less damaging access to the lines for maintenance after the lines are in place. The report does describe CT and MA DOT policies that discourage the placement of lines along interstate highways; however, no mention is made of any serious efforts the utilities might have made toward the accommodation of the utilities needs with the DOTs. The CC suspects that it is simply easier for them to do their construction through the largely unprotected "Quiet Corner" of Connecticut.

4. Besides the apparent targeting of Option A, the analogous criticism may be made of the overall presentation: the five NE CT options are considered without describing the full integration of this project with neighboring projects. There are broad brush presentations of NY- New England needs, but no analysis of how the efficiencies and costs of these other projects might affect the costs and efficiencies of options presented in the report. Specifically, the benefits and costs of the proposed Springfield reliability project and how it might benefit from the C-2 Option are not detailed. It would appear that the C-2 option, tentatively rejected by the report, would bring additional power toward central Massachusetts before routing it towards Connecticut's Fairfield County. This might significantly improve the reliability and lower the combined costs of both the C-2 Option and the pending Springfield project.

The Mansfield Conservation Commission would like to make the following comments on the report. This is followed by a listing of comments and concerns presented during the "Opportunity for Public Comment" at a recent CC meeting:

A. The estimated initial costs of Options A, C-1 and C-2, respectively, are \$400M, \$400M, and \$450M (Fig. 2-1 in the solutions Report). These costs don't appear to reflect future maintenance costs, which may be higher in remote sections of NE Connecticut. Nor do the costs reflect the savings and benefits that might be realized in conjunction with efforts not described in detail in this filing (e.g., the coming improvements for the Springfield area).

B. Page 2-3 in the Solutions Report states, "Ultimately, a comparative analysis of Option A and Option C-2 showed that, although both potential solutions had merit, Option A performed better, cost less, and had fewer environmental and social impacts." Again, we feel this may reflect an attitude that the "Quiet Corner" will be less of a problem for CL&P to deal with!

C. Certain "Statutory Facilities" are of special regulatory concern. These include daycare facilities (Mount Hope Montessori School), residential areas (Highland

Road?), and public playgrounds. CL&P claims that the CT ROW has no public playgrounds adjacent to it. It is not clear whether the Mansfield Hollow Park and picnic area should not have been considered a statutory facility under their guidelines; however, at their Mansfield presentation CL&P's Derrick Bradstreet stated clearly that ball fields would fall into the "statutory facility" category. The CC feels that the cleared recreation areas and the ball field in the Mansfield Hollow Dam Recreation area were overlooked by the report.

D. In the past, CL&P has utilized toxic chemicals to reduce the growth of trees and brush and the protection of poles from rot and insect damage. There are a number of areas where this should not be permitted, e.g., near aquifers, on farmland, and public recreation areas. We note that the Mansfield Hollow area bisected by the existing line is a part of a major aquifer system and sits in the middle of a public water supply watershed. Not even swimming is permitted in the water impounded behind the dam.

E. In the event the Army Core of Engineers refuses the increased ROW requested by CL&P, CL&P will have to use the more expensive Willimantic bypass route. This would avoid the Mansfield Hollow area. If after all considerations are taken into account, and Option A significantly exceeds Option C-2 in Cost, CL&P might even be convinced to go with Option C-2 and avoid NE CT.

F. Page V-2, under Avoidance or Minimization of Impacts to Environmental Resources, states: "In accordance with federal, state, and municipal environmental protection policies, the avoidance or minimization of new or expanded corridors through sensitive environmental resource areas such as parks, wildlife areas, and wetlands is desired." The Mansfield Conservation Commission feels strongly that not enough weight was given to this guideline with regard to the pristine nature of NE Connecticut, otherwise they would not be considering a route requiring an expanded ROW through Mansfield Hollow Park and the numerous wildlife areas in NE Connecticut. Instead, the report makes vague claims about the comparative acreage that would be affected in a comparison of Options A and C-2. Just as not all wetlands are of equivalent importance, the same may be said of open space (including forests) and farmland. Northeastern Connecticut is a unique area, remaining surprisingly unspoiled in the Washington, D.C. – Boston corridor. This should be taken into account, not taken advantage of.

G. Portions of the report's "Options Analysis" seem slanted to justify the 2006 choice of Option A. One example of this may be found in Table 2-4 in the Solutions Report. This table provides a comparison of the various options. Under the category of CT import N-1-1 (MW) Option A is ranked 1st (2,783 MW) when Option C is nearly equivalent (2,727 MW) approximately a 2% difference. Further down the table when Option A ranks 3rd, approximately 4% lower than Option C, the difference is remarked upon as "not significant." In another category Option C is nearly 20% better than A, but this is not remarked upon. These points, by themselves, do not seem significant; however, they give weight to our conclusion that this document was written more to confirm the choice made by the utilities in 2006 than to provide a balanced and unbiased comparison of the options.

IN CONCLUSION, THE MANSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE TOWN OF MANSFIELD TAKE A STAND AGAINST OPTION A AND REQUEST THAT THE NEEWS GROUP MAKE A SIMILAR, IN DEPTH STUDY OF OPTION C-2 BEFORE CONCLUDING THAT THEIR PROPOSED ROUTE THROUGH THE FORESTS, FARMS, AND PARKS OF NE CONNECTICUT IS THE BEST OPTION. WE FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT THE OFFICES OF DENISE MERRILL BE ENLISTED IN THIS EFFORT.

At the September 2008 Conservation Commission meeting a number of concerns were presented during our "Opportunity for Public Comment," should Option A prove to be the best option and the current ROW become more fully utilized. The Conservation Commission recommends the Town Council address these concerns. They include:

1. At the Chaplin CL&P informational session, one of the CL&P representatives apparently stated that an important purpose of the proposed line through NE CT was to provide Fairfield Count with additional power.
2. The effect of the project (tree cutting, additional poles, etc.) on Mansfield's residential areas, for example, in the Highland Road area.
3. Will lights be required on poles in the vicinity of the Windham Airport? How will these poles and additional tree cutting affect the Mansfield Hollow Park area?
4. In the past, ATVs have utilized the ROWs to the detriment of stability of some soils and the neighbor's peace-of-mind. Barriers to ATV's must be placed where necessary.
5. Reports of earlier construction by CL&P indicate that the spreading of sub-soils on the surface sometimes resulted in dead areas – they should be required to dispose of sub-soils properly.
6. Agricultural lands should be restored and there should be compensation for any lost crops.
7. It was pointed out that the 1956 easement to CL&P includes the right of access through adjoining properties. Access roads through such properties should be minimized and the areas should be restored after the construction is completed.