

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 16 September 2009
Conference B, Beck Building
MINUTES

Members present: Scott Lehmann, John Silander, Joan Stevenson. *Members absent:* Robert Dahn, Peter Drzewiecki, Quentin Kessel, Frank Trainor. *Others present:* JC Beall, Katrina Higgins, Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:37p by Acting Chair John Silander.
2. The draft **minutes of the 19 August 09 meeting**, circulated by e-mail shortly thereafter, were approved as written.

3. IWA referral W1438 (Beall & Higgins, Wormwood Hill Rd) Because abutters did not receive the legally required notice, the proposal approved by the IWA as W1433 is being considered *de novo*.

Silander participated in the IWA Field Trip to the site on 9/15/09 and made the following observations: (1) The small wetland shown on the site plan did not appear to have any obligate wetland vegetation, but may contain standing water at times. To qualify as a vernal pool, water would have to remain in it for more than a month (usually 2-3 months) in the spring. A determination of whether this is likely is a matter for a hydrologist and a vernal pool biologist. (2) It is also unclear whether the small wetland drains to a pond below (if it does, the potential impact on neighboring wetlands may be greater); this also is a matter for a hydrologist. (3) Only a portion of the septic system and a portion of the driveway lie within the 150 ft wetlands buffer; it may be possible to alter the plan slightly so that house, driveway, and septic are not in the buffer (and the proposal would presumably need no wetlands permit).

Concerning (1), Meitzler pointed out that a vernal pool is just a wetland from the perspective of Town wetland regulations, so a finding that it is or isn't a vernal pool has no regulatory force. Concerning (2), he noted that the wetland is in a bowl whose lip rises about 12-18 inches above it on the down-slope side.

Stevenson and Lehmann recused themselves, leaving just one disinterested Commission member present, a number insufficient to pass a credible motion. Accordingly, the members present agreed simply to pass the above observations along to the IWA. {Beall & Higgins then left the meeting.}

4. 2009 Planning Acquisition and Management Guidelines. These guidelines, updated by the Town Council on 8/24/09, assign to the Commission responsibility for "periodically monitoring Mansfield's existing conservation easements." (IV) Since there are many such easements, this will be a big job. While planning was deferred to a better-attended meeting, it was suggested (1) that we settle on a monitoring period – one year? two years? – and schedule site visits on a monthly basis throughout it, and (2) that we enlist the help of

neighbors through letters asking them to report any untoward activity on conservation easements. In response to a query about who is responsible for posting signs demarcating conservation easements, Meitzler said that most easements are connected to subdivisions and that the subdivision's surveyor must certify that boundaries are correctly delineated and signed.

5. Invasive plantings. The CVS site (**W1429** - groundwater purification project) was replanted with invasives because Town regulations apparently cover only new projects, not replantings (unlike current State regulations, which prohibit any planting of invasive species on state land, including UConn property). The sense of members present was that the Commission should propose stronger regulations to the PZC, but this too was deferred to a better-attended meeting.

6. Adjourned at 8:15p

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 17 September 09

Approved, with revisions by Silander, 22 October 09