

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 20 January 2010
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
MINUTES

Members present: Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, John Silander, Frank Trainor.
Members absent: Robert Dahn, Peter Drzewiecki, Joan Stevenson. *Others present:* Jackie D'Amato, Jake Friedman, Marcus Hilditch, William Okeson, Beverly Sims (regarding item 2); Grant Meitzler (staff).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:30p by Chair Quentin Kessel.

2. Ponde Place test wells. Ponde Place LLC has had four test wells drilled on the property to determine whether there is sufficient ground water to supply 45K gpd. Water at high pressure has been injected into the test wells to fracture rock ("hydro-fracking") and liberate water. A 72-hour pump test, now underway, will conclude tomorrow. Neighbors D'Amato, Friedman, Hilditch, Okeson, & Sims expressed concerns about this activity:

- The test well permit requires monitoring a number of existing wells to determine whether pumping has adverse neighborhood effects. However, the wells closest to the test site are not being monitored: Ms. Sims' well was rejected for monitoring because the well-head was covered by an inch of surface water; Mr. Friedman refused to authorize monitoring because Ponde Place LLC would not agree to assume responsibility for any damage the nearby drilling and hydrofracking might cause to his well; Ms. D'Amato & Mr. Hilditch were not approached. Another neighbor dropped out of the monitoring program because her water turned brown after the probe was inserted in her well. {Meitzler suggested that iron deposits on the inside of the well casing might have been disturbed when the probe was inserted.} Since the wells most likely to be adversely affected by hydro-fracking and drawdown are not being monitored, why is the test proceeding?
- Access to the test site has been improved by bringing in fill to raise the bed of the woods road (extending N. from Northwood Rd) where it crosses a wetland. This may impact the wetland; is it authorized by the permit? {Meitzler thought that the required silt barriers were in place and would protect the wetland; he will take another look at the site.}
- The permit authorizes drilling four test wells only if the first two were inadequate, yet all seem to have been drilled at the same time. {Meitzler's impression is that the first two wells reached little water.}

The monitoring issue appears to be the most serious: if monitoring is inadequate, the pump test will have to be repeated, according to Meitzler. Neither the Commission nor anyone else at the meeting knew which wells were being monitored and whether there is reason to believe they are representative. The Commission will ask Greg Padick to clarify the situation. (D'Amato, Friedman, Hilditch, Okeson, & Sims left the meeting.)

3. The draft **minutes of the 16 December 2009 meeting** were approved as written.

4. Joint Presentation to Town Council. Representatives of the Open Space Committee, Parks Advisory Committee, and Conservation Commission will meet tomorrow to plan a presentation to the Town Council to remind Council members of the value of open space. Kessel will attend.

5. UConn Hazardous Waste Transfer Station. The proposed move of this facility from its current location E. of Horsebarn Hill to near UConn's sewage treatment plant is in limbo. The Commission believes that the transfer station should not be located where an accident or mischief could pollute the Fenton River and its aquifers. Kessel will ask Matt Hart to bring the issue to the Town-Gown Committee.

6. Term Limits. Current Town policy limits terms on committees to no more than ten years in a row (three 3-year terms), though this policy has not been enforced of late. Four current members of the Commission are not in compliance with this policy. The Commission is concerned that enforcement of this policy would make it difficult to assemble a quorum, since long-standing members tend to be more committed and requests that Alternate Members be named have gone unanswered.

7. Streamflow Standards. The DEP has proposed to regulate diversions from streams so that flows adequate for fish and other organisms are maintained. Connecticut's rivers and streams would be placed into four categories by condition, ranging from Class 1 ("having little current development in the watershed and having not been affected by the removal of water from human uses") to Class 4 ("where past practices have resulted in a significant deviation from the natural stream flow pattern and restoring these rivers and streams to a more natural condition would cause and extreme economic hardship"). Flow standards for Class 1 would aim to protect "ecological health"; those for Classes 2-4 would weigh human needs more & more heavily. Flow management plans to achieve these standards would be phased in over time.

While the proposed regulations seem generally good, Lehmann observed that Class 4 streams would essentially be written off: there would be little pressure to restore them to "a more natural condition." Written comments on the proposal will be accepted until 04 February 10.

8. UConn stormwater management. Kessel distributed a new revised version of the draft comment to DEP Commissioner Marrella on UConn's stormwater management plan. After some discussion, the Commission approved the letter, with minor editorial changes (motion: Silander, Trainor; all in favor save Lehmann, who abstained, citing insufficient time to consider whether reservations about the previous version had been adequately addressed).

9. Mirror Lake dredging. UConn has applied to DEP for a permit to dredge Mirror Lake to increase its capacity and improve water quality. Improvements to the spillway called for in the Stormwater Management Plan will be made at this time. Approximately 17.1 K cubic yards of sediment will be removed and dewatered in basins constructed near Rte.195. Clarified water will be pumped back into Mirror L, the dewatered sediment removed to somebody else's back yard. The Commission is concerned that returning nutrient rich water to Mirror Lake will nourish algal blooms there and in Roberts Brook; it wonders whether a limnologist was consulted in planning this project. Kessel will request that the DEP hold a public hearing in Storrs on the permit application.

7. Adjourned at 9:30p. Next meeting: Wednesday, 17 February 2010, 7:30p.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 21 January 2010; revised 22 January 2010.
Approved 17 February 2010