

Town of Mansfield  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
Meeting of 21 April 2010  
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building  
**MINUTES**

*Members present:* Peter Drzewiecki, Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, Frank Trainor.  
*Members absent:* Robert Dahn, John Silander, Joan Stevenson. *Others present:* Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent), Greg Padick (Town Planner); Neil Faccinetti, Karl Guillard, John Rickards (residents).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:39p by Chair Quentin Kessel.

**2. Public Comment.** Neil Faccinetti expressed concerns about the potential 'neighborhood effects' of the University's new turf research program at the agronomy farm on Spring Hill. These operations require additional water for irrigation, and four new production wells have been drilled; what effect might the extra withdrawal of groundwater have on nearby wells? The operations also involve surface applications of fertilizer and other chemicals; how might runoff affect water quality in nearby wells? There is supposed to be a monitoring program to assess these risks, but Mr. Faccinetti raised questions about its design and operation:

- Of the 4 deep monitoring wells called for, one is a production well that failed to supply sufficient water and was re-designated a monitoring well, while a second encountered a rock collapse during drilling. Can data from these defective wells really indicate whether the new production wells are mining groundwater (i.e., withdrawal rate exceeds recharge rate)?
- Surface water quality is supposed to be monitored by testing for nitrates in 2 shallow wells. Is this sufficient, given that other chemicals are being used on the turf fields?
- There does not appear to be any provision for monitoring neighborhood wells. 4 such wells were monitored in 2008 during a test pumping from existing agronomy farm wells, but that was before the new production wells were drilled.
- Are monitoring instruments installed in the monitoring wells? How often are data collected? Will these data be made available to the public for review?

Greg Padick indicated that, while the Town has no jurisdiction over the use of State land, it's his understanding that the University administration is willing to answer questions and to attempt to address concerns about land use issues. The Commission agreed unanimously (**motion:** Trainor, Drzewiecki) to invite the University to send representatives to its 5/19 meeting to answer questions from residents about well-monitoring at the agronomy farm. {Faccinetti, Guillard, & Rickards left the meeting.}

3. The draft **minutes of the 17 March 2010 meeting**, with deletion of the first return address on the letter to Denise Ruzicka, were approved.

**4. PZC referrals.** Padick outlined proposed amendments to zoning and subdivision regulations on which hearings are scheduled for 6/7. The Commission will discuss them at its May meeting.

- a. **Invasive species.** Sentences prohibiting use of invasive species (as defined by the DEP) in landscaping applications would be added to PZC regulations.

b. **Aquifer protection.** Language designed to raise the profile of aquifer and public water supply protection would be added to PZC regulations. Applicants would be required to map aquifers within 500' of a proposed development. Padick noted that the proposed language diverges somewhat from the Commission's recommendations: (i) aquifer protection would be the responsibility of the PZC (rather than the IWA), (ii) the new language speaks generally of "aquifers" rather than of "stratified drift aquifers", (iii) the pre-application reviews urged by the Commission are still being studied by the PZC.

**5. Gag Rule.** Padick passed along to the Commission a 19 April memo from the Town Clerk indicating that the Committee on Committees has recommended to the Town Council that the 2/3/00 Policy Regarding Advisory Committees' Communications with Outside Agencies be reaffirmed without change.

**6. Pleasant Valley rezoning.** Padick summarized for the Commission a draft of proposed zoning changes for the area south of Pleasant Valley Rd. The Pleasant Valley Industrial Park Zone (a relic of the days when routing I-84 from Hartford to Providence was promoted as an economic development project) would be rezoned into three sections: RAR-90 to the west of Mansfield Avenue, Pleasant Valley Commercial Agriculture (PVCA), allowing limited commercial development, and Pleasant Valley Residence Agriculture (PVRA) to the east. This area has prime agricultural soils overlying a large aquifer, as well as significant scenic values, but it is also one of the few areas in town served by public water and sewer and therefore suitable for multi-family housing. This rezoning proposal, which the Commission will consider at its May meeting, is the PZC's latest attempt to reconcile preservation and development here. Among other things, it would require a 500' setback from Pleasant Valley Road for any structure. {Padick left the meeting.}

**7.** Kessel reported that:

- a. He and Padick will attend a **Natchaug River Basin Project** meeting on 4/29. This group is being organized to help implement a conservation action plan for the basin.
- b. Bonding authority for **open space** purchase will be on the November ballot.
- c. The DEP has written to Rich Miller regarding UConn's permit for work on the **Swan L. outfall** asking for documents relating to concerns raised by the Commission about shortcomings in the UConn's application for the permit and requesting that no work be done under the permit until the DEP has reviewed this material.
- d. A response from Baystate Environmental Consultants to the Commission's concerns about the **Mirror L. dredging project** has been sent to the DEP, pursuant to its request for more information about the project. It is in the packet for this meeting.

**8. IWA referrals.**

- a. **W1450 (Town of Mansfield).** The Town has negotiated an easement across the Healy property in Mansfield Center to provide access from Bassetts Bridge Road to town-owned fields adjacent to the Old Mansfield Center Cemetery. A 12' wide gated gravel road between Healy's barn and the kettle bog is proposed to permit passage of mowing machinery. The Commission unanimously agreed (**motion:** Trainor, Drzewiecki) with Meitzler's assessment that no significant impact on the bog

is to be expected, provided standard erosion controls are employed during construction. {Lehmann participated in the 4/14 IWA field trip to this site; his report is attached.}

b. **W1451 (Town of Mansfield)**. A few sections of the Town's wetlands regulations relating to the expiration of permits are to be slightly revised as required by a change in state statutes. No comment appears to be necessary or useful.

**9. Adjourned** at 9:21p. Next meeting: 7:30p, Wednesday, 19 May 2010

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 23 April 2010; approved 19 May 2010

**Attachment:** Report on 14 April 2010 IWA Field Trip

**W1450 (Healey Property, 476 Storrs Rd)**. This is a remnant of the Eaton Farms property in Mansfield Center, extending from relatively narrow frontage on Rte 195 back to the kettle bog. The Town is negotiating a right-of-way across the slight slope between the old barn and the bog to provide pedestrian and farm access from Bassetts Bridge Rd to Town-owned land between the Healey property and the Old Mansfield Cemetery, and is proposing to construct a 12' wide gravel road here for haying operations. There is not much distance between the barn and the bog – the edge of the proposed road would be only about 25' from the bog. However, a road of this sort would probably protect the bog from the sedimentation to be expected, were farm machinery simply driven over the grassy slope.