

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 16 February 2011
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
MINUTES

Members present: Neil Facchinetti (Alt.), Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, John Silander.
Members absent: Joan Buck (Alt.), Robert Dahn, Peter Drzewiecki, Frank Trainor. *Others present:* Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:31p by Chair Quentin Kessel.
2. The draft **minutes of the 19 January 2011 meeting** were approved as corrected.
3. **IWA referrals.**
 - a. **W1471 (Savin Foods, 153 N. Eagleville Rd)** The proposal is to replace the septic system at this commercial property with a connection across N. Eagleville Rd to the UConn sewer line, which lies at the edge of wetlands. The Commission unanimously agreed (motion: Silander, Facchinetti) that no significant impact on wetlands is to be expected, provided standard erosion control measures are employed during construction.
 - b. **W1472 (White Oak Condominiums, Mansfield City Rd)** These condos were constructed on poorly drained land in the pre-IWA era. Building 4 now needs a footing drain with discharge to wetlands. The Commission unanimously agreed (motion: Silander, Facchinetti) that no significant impact on wetlands is to be expected from this project, provided standard erosion control measures are employed during construction.
4. **Natchaug River Basin Conservation Compact.** This compact (drafted by a working group of individuals from towns in the Natchaug River basin, assembled by the Green Valley Institute and The Nature Conservancy) calls for basin towns to “work cooperatively to balance conservation and growth by ... protecting and restoring the natural resources of the watershed,” including “supporting efforts to link and maintain ecologically viable habitats and rural landscapes.” The Commission unanimously endorsed the compact as a useful reminder of environmental responsibilities and urges the Town Council to adopt it.
5. **Agronomy Farm.** Facchinetti has obtained a list (“2010 UConn PSLA Farm Pesticide Use Records”) of 73 chemicals, including pesticides and herbicides, used on the UConn Agronomy Farm, some but not all of which are being tested for in water from the monitoring wells. Significant nitrates in one of the shallow wells suggest that runoff is contaminated with fertilizer – and perhaps other untested chemicals applied to the fields.
6. **Swan Lake diversion history.** Meitzler displayed plans (dated February 1974) for diversion of storm runoff from Swan Lake. They appear to have called for raising the dam at the west end (governing flow to Eagleville Brook) to 602.86 ft, while constructing a drain at the east end so that water above 602.46 ft flows under Rte 195 to Valentine Meadow.
7. **State Issues.** Kessel alerted the Commission to some state issues of concern/interest:
 - a. According to the Windham County Conservation Consortium, management of State Forests is suffering due to inadequate staffing of DEP’s Forestry Division. Its State Lands

Management Program is operating (or not) with half the staff it had fifteen years ago.

b. Some municipal lands are now closed to recreation because courts have ruled that statutory provisions protecting private landowners from liability for recreational use do not apply to them. Legislative remedies have been proposed in S.B. 43 & 90 and H.B. 5254. The Commission agreed that the Chair should prepare a letter to legislators supporting these measures, for review by the Town Planner.

c. Connecticut state statutes require that at least one member of (or staff person for) an inland wetland commission have appropriate training (usually provided by the DEP). H.B. 5097 would require “municipal inland wetlands commissions to state on the record, after convening a public hearing, whether the members of the commission are in compliance with all statutory training requirements.” Some observers fear that doing so would make some IWA decisions vulnerable to legal challenge by developers.

8. Dark Sky ordinance. Kessel will attend a Green Valley Institute presentation on 2/28 in Chaplin on preserving a view of the stars in the Last Green Valley.

9. Adjourned at 8:40p. Next meeting: 7:30p, Wednesday, 16 March.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 20 February 2011; approved as amended 16 March 2011.