

Town of Mansfield  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
Meeting of 21 December 2011  
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building  
**(draft) MINUTES**

*Members present:* Robert Dahn, Neil Facchinetti, Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, John Silander, Frank Trainor. *Members absent:* Aline Booth (Alt.), Joan Buck (Alt.), Peter Drzewiecki. *Others present:* Interstate Reliability Project: Jeff Buckley (Burns & McDonnell Engineering), Jeffrey Martin (NUSCO), Tony Mele (NU Transmission), John Yarbrough (Carmody & Torrance, LLP); Hawthorne Lane residents: Chris Duers, Wayne Hawthorne, Richard (“Scott”) Welden; Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent), Linda Painter (Town Planner).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:34p by Chair Quentin Kessel. The Commission agreed unanimously to reorder and expand its agenda to accommodate guests and two items of new business.

2. The draft **minutes of the 16 November meeting**, with the excision of the second sentence of item 5, were approved.

**3. Interstate Reliability Project.**

a. CL&P has updated its 2008 proposal for a second 345kv transmission line to improve the electric power grid in S. New England. Its preferred alternative remains running the new line through NE Connecticut in the existing right-of-way (ROW) using a second column of poles. Use of monopoles in some sections of Mansfield would slightly reduce the amount of new clearing required in the ROW. The option preferred by the Commission (running the line parallel to I-90 & then down to Manchester) was rejected as more costly (\$700M with greater environmental impact vs. \$532M). Somewhat more costly variations on CL&P’s preferred option include placing some sections of the line in Mansfield underground and avoiding Mansfield entirely (at Windham’s expense). For details, see Linda Painter’s report:

[www.mansfieldct.gov/1904/1932/16188/interstate\\_reliability\\_project\\_report.pdf](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/1904/1932/16188/interstate_reliability_project_report.pdf)

b. Responding to questions from the Commission, representatives of CL&P indicated that the project aims (1) to eliminate bottlenecks in moving power to S. New England, a net importer of electricity, and (2) to increase the grid’s reliability by providing redundancy through a second 345kv circuit. Higher single-pole structures carrying both the old and new 345kv line (which the Commission had suggested in order to avoid additional clearing in the ROW) might achieve(1) but not (2), since failure of a single structure would take out both circuits.

c. **PZC #1177 (Hawthorne La, Conservation Easement).** Residents of Hawthorne Lane have proposed that CL&P slightly ‘cut the corner’ of its ROW at the Hawthorne La cul de sac so that the buffer of trees in front of their homes does not disappear. This would require liquidating 0.32 acres of a Town conservation easement (and the trees thereon). In exchange, the residents have agreed to offer the town a conservation easement on 0.64 acres of wooded land at the rear of two of their lots. This slight re-routing is not part of CL&P’s preferred alternative, but it will be included as an option in its application to the Connecticut Siting Council, provided the Town agrees to the easement swap. After some discussion, the Commission agreed unanimously (**motion:** Lehmann, Dahn) that it had no objection to the proposed exchange of conservation easements. CL&P representatives and Hawthorne La residents left the meeting.

**4. IWA referrals.** Lehmann visited these sites on the 13 December IWA Field Trip; his report is attached.

- a. **W1489 (Town of Mansfield, Woodland Rd).** To address an erosion problem, the Town proposes to redirect drainage from a catchment in Ashford to a wooded area in Mansfield above a wetland, via 180 feet of 18-inch pipe with a level spreader at its egress to control erosion. The Commission does not expect any significant wetlands impact from this project as proposed (**motion:** Lehmann, Trainor; approved unanimously).
- b. **W1490 (Eastbrook Mall, 95 Storrs Rd).** Two projects are proposed at Eastbrook Mall: (1) a 14.5K ft<sup>2</sup> addition to the N end (TJ-Max end) of the building and (2) a pad for a 3.2K ft<sup>2</sup> building on the grassy triangle at the NE corner of the property between Rt. 195 and Sawmill Brook. (1) requires cutting the existing access road around the N side of the mall into the hill that separates it from Sawmill Brook; (2) requires access from the mall to the new building pad by a bridge over Sawmill Brook. After some discussion, the Commission agreed on the following **motion** (Facchinetti, Silander; all in favor save Dahn, who abstained because he has done work for the developer):
  - (A) The Commission is concerned about runoff into Sawmill Brook from the Eastbrook Mall parking lots. To provide some protection for the brook, developers of the proposed expansion should eliminate at least as much impervious cover (IC) southwest of the brook as is created by the expansion; in particular, the eliminated IC should be replaced with a broad vegetated berm on the southwest side of the brook.
  - (B) The brook should be protected from sedimentation during construction by adequate erosion-control measures.
  - (C) Realigning the north access road will bring it quite close to the brook, and it is not possible, on the basis of the information provided, to rule out a significant impact on the brook.
- c. **W1491 (Cumberland Farms, 4 Corners).** As this application is essentially a resubmission of W1483, the Commission saw no need to revise its comment of 20 July 2011.

**5. Executive Session.** At approximately 8:50p the Commission voted unanimously (**motion:** Dahn, Facchinetti) to go into executive session to discuss a property acquisition issue; Painter and Meitzler remained in attendance. The executive session ended and the regular meeting resumed at 9:00p (**motion:** Trainor, Dahn; approved unanimously).

**6. UConn Water Supply Source Study.** UConn has added relocating Fenton Well A farther from the Fenton River to the list of alternative water sources being evaluated.

**7. Heidinger Letter.** A 14 December letter to the Commission from Kurt Heidinger points out that, in the view of the Attorney General in 2000, UConn (as a state agency) does not qualify as a water company and its operations are therefore not subject to DEEP oversight under the state's aquifer protection program. The Commission agreed to pass Mr. Heidinger's letter along to the Town Council with the recommendation that it address concerns about the lack of legal authority for regulating UConn's use of the Willimantic and Fenton River wellfields.

**8. Dark Skies.** The Conservation Commissions of Mansfield, Ashford, & Willington will sponsor a showing of "The City Dark," a documentary film on light pollution, at 7:00p, 03 February 2012 at E.O. Smith. A representative from the International Dark Sky Association will attend to answer questions.

**9. North Hillside Rd.** The Final EIS on this project to connect UConn to Rt. 44 has been issued. The deadline for comments is 23 January 2012.

## 8. Adjourned at 9:13p.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 27 December 2011.

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### **Attachment:** Report on 12/13/2011 IWA Field Trip (Scott Lehmann, 12/14)

W1489 (Town of Mansfield, Woodland Rd). What was a seasonal front-yard pond on several lots in Ashford just north of the Mansfield town line is now drained via a catchment & pipe S into Mansfield. At some times of year water gushing from the pipe forms a small stream that erodes a horse pasture off Woodland Rd. To avoid this, the Town proposes to re-direct the water from the catch basin to a wooded area to the SE through 180' of 18" pipe. The water would exit the pipe onto a level spreader about 40' above a wetland. Assuming the drained water isn't contaminated with lawn chemicals, I don't anticipate any significant wetland impact from this project.

PZC1177 (Hawthorne La, Conservation Easement modification). Residents of Hawthorne La will lose a treed buffer between their homes and CL&P's power lines if the Interstate Reliability Project proceeds as proposed: more of CL&P's right-of-way on the N will be cleared for a second column of transmission lines. To save the buffer, the residents have proposed a small alteration in the right-of-way, which would run it through a 0.35 acre triangle of woods on which the Town holds a conservation easement (the trees -- including a large white pine -- on this parcel would be cleared for the transmission lines).

When the proposal came before the Commission in July 2010, we suggested that the Town acquire a conservation easement on the treed buffer as a quid pro quo. However, this turns out to be legally very complicated (an Attorney Enrichment Program). The residents have now proposed exchanging the Town's 0.35 acre conservation easement for one on 0.35 acres of woods at the rear of one of their lots, abutting a existing Town conservation easement. Field Trip participants located the area on a map but did not walk back to it.

Lifting the encumbrance on the wooded triangle represented by the Town's conservation easement is a necessary but not sufficient condition for relocating the right-of-way. If the easement is out of the way, CL&P is prepared to propose adjusting the right-of-way accordingly to the Connecticut Siting Council (under a provision allowing such adjustments for EMF mitigation). However, the cost of relocating the existing lines is on the order of \$1M, which would be passed along to rate-payers, and the Siting Council may not approve.

W1490 (Eastbrook Mall, Storrs Rd) Two projects are proposed: (1) an addition to the TJMax-end of the mall that would cover the parking area and some of the roadway to the N (the new roadway would be cut into the hill separating the mall from Sawmill Br), and (2) a pad for a small building in the grassy triangle of land between Sawmill Br and Rte 195, to be accessed by a bridge over Sawmill Br and a cut to Rte 195. The relocated road would be quite close to the brook at its E end, but they would still be separated by a rise. A bridge over the brook, here channelized, would further compromise it, in my view. It is not clear to me why a small building could not be located in the present parking lot, which was half empty when we visited, less than two weeks before Christmas.