

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 18 July 2012
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
MINUTES

Members present: Aline Booth (Alt.), Neil Facchinetti, Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann.

Members absent: Joan Buck (Alt.), Robert Dahn, Peter Drzewiecki, Frank Trainor, John Silander.

Others present: Tom Boyle (Eagleville Development Group), Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent), Linda Painter (Town Planner), Nathan Wojtajna (UConn student)

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:33p by Chair Quentin Kessel. Alternate Aline Booth was designated a voting member for this meeting.

2. The draft **minutes of the 20 June 2012 meeting** were approved as written.

3. PZC 1214-3: Beacon Hill Estates Section II, Mansfield City Rd. After reviewing comments on its Off-Site and Neighborhood Influences Inventory Plan and Site Analysis Plan, Eagleville Development Group has submitted a Conceptual Yield Plan and Conceptual Layout Plan for a second phase of the Beacon Hill Estates subdivision on Mansfield City Road.

The yield plan proposes that regulations allow seventeen 2-acre lots to be developed on the property (with two driveway cuts on Mansfield City Rd. and two connected access roads from Mansfield City and Beacon Hill Roads). The layout plan proposes fourteen lots (50K ft² minimum) in the eastern portion of the property, clustered along an access road (“Wyllys Farm Road”) from Beacon Hill Road, plus three large lots (170K ft² and up) in the western part of the property, accessed by a common driveway from the new access road. This common driveway would have to cross a north-south wetland that bisects the property.

Undeveloped frontage on Mansfield City Road would be maintained by an open space dedication. Three additional open space dedications encompass the wetland (save for the driveway corridor); two of them are contiguous with Town or State land. In all, 26 acres would be dedicated to the Town as open space. According to Tom Boyle, 98% of (the length of) stone walls on the property would be preserved, primarily by utilizing them as lot boundaries.

Booth wondered if the open space dedication of Mansfield City Road frontage could be replaced by conservation easements on larger lots without opening up the possibility that their owners could sell the frontage for development. Monitoring a conservation easement on private property may be less onerous for the Town than managing an open space dedication. Painter indicated that a conservation easement would be legally sufficient to prevent future development.

Kessel observed that the open space dedication, while generous in terms of area, is fragmented. No dedicated open space connects the Town and State land, limiting the reach of a future trail system and the recreational use of dedicated open space by subdivision residents. The three lots in the western portion are considerably larger than necessary; trimming and shifting them a bit would permit a more useful dedication of connected open space.

The Commission had hoped that development of the western portion could be avoided entirely, so as to preserve a large tract of interior forest and avoid a road or common driveway across the wetland. Painter suggested that it might be possible to squeeze more lots into the eastern portion, but that doing so would probably require sacrificing stone walls and undeveloped frontage on Mansfield City Road. It is conceivable that the western portion of the property could be preserved through a program administered by the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services (DRS) that allows tax credits for donations to approved projects, such as open space acquisition. However, the DRS’s tax-credit “budget” is limited, and the Town has no

experience with this program.

The Commission was not up to formulating a comment to the PAC on the subdivision plan and agreed to let the minutes reflect the discussion. Mr. Boyle left the meeting.

4. Hazardous Waste Transfer Station. Painter reported that an advisory committee on relocating UConn's hazardous waste transfer station has met and aims to nominate 5-6 potential sites for an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE). The present location behind Horsebarn Hill may be among them, despite its being in a public water supply watershed. Various stakeholders (including UConn, the Town of Mansfield, the Naubesatuck Watershed Council) are represented on the committee.

5. Water Issues.

- a. The **Water Source Study for the Four Corners Area** has added proposals from Hartford's MDC to its EIE process. MDC water would arrive via a new pipeline routed along US 44 or I-84. Painter indicated that the cost of such a pipeline would be very large (on the order of \$100M) and that zoning changes in corridor towns would be required by DEEP to keep the project from becoming an engine of sprawl.
- b. Kessel attended the Town Council's 12 July **Workshop on Water Supply Issues** and was impressed by the quality of the presenters and their patience in answering questions. Former Council member (now State Rep.) Greg Haddad was among those raising the issue of governance, emphasizing the importance of the Town's having a say in how any new water is allocated.
- c. Painter reported that UConn has moved to **Stage II Water Conservation** today (18 July), as flows in the Fenton and Willimantic Rivers continue to decline in the absence of significant rainfall.
- d. Nathan Wojtajna is working on a project to sharply reduce **Hockanum's use of UConn water** at the former Mansfield Training School greenhouses by capturing rainwater runoff from the roof for use in watering plants.

6. Agricultural Ordinances. The Town Council will be considering several proposed ordinances relating to agriculture, among them, the Right-to-Farm ordinance that the Commission discussed at its March meeting. Lehmann will send the relevant portion of the March minutes to Painter to forward to the Council as the Commission's comment.

7. Adjourned at 8:53p. Kessel will e-mail members to determine whether a quorum can be assembled for the scheduled August meeting on 15 August.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 20 July 2012; approved 19 September 2012.