

Town of Mansfield  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
Meeting of 19 March 2014  
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building  
**MINUTES**

*Members present:* Aline Booth (Alt.), Joan Buck (Alt.), Neil Facchinetti, Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, John Silander, Michael Soares. *Members absent:* Robert Dahn, Peter Drzewiecki. *Others present:* Linda Painter (Town Planner).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:30p by Chair Quentin Kessel. Alternates Booth and Buck were designated voting members for this meeting.
2. The draft **minutes** of the regular meeting of 20 November 2013 and the special meeting of 08 January 2014 were approved as written. {The regular meetings scheduled for 18 December 2013, 15 January 2014, and 19 February 2014 were cancelled.}
3. **Jacobson Property.** DEEP has notified the Town that the Jacobson property on the north side of Gurleyville Rd just west of the Fenton River is for sale, should the Town be interested in acquiring it for open space. It may not be sub-dividable – Gurleyville Rd frontage is meager – and there may be environmental issues related to an old gravel pit and rifle range.
4. **Mansfield Tomorrow.** The Commission has been asked to comment on the draft Plan of Conservation and Development issuing from the Mansfield Tomorrow study. Kessel distributed copies of comments from the Open Space Preservation Committee (2 pages, 03/18/14). Most of the subsequent discussion focused on Chapter 3 (“Natural systems”) and Chapter 4 (“Open Space, Parks and Working Lands”). Comments and questions:
  - Kessel expressed some disappointment that agriculture is treated in several different chapters, so that someone interested in this subject has to read here and there to see what goals, policies, and actions bearing on it are proposed in the Plan. Painter noted that this is a consequence of organizing the study around overlapping categories like natural systems, sustainability, transportation, housing, economic development, etc. Agriculture contributes greatly to rural character, can impact water resources for good or ill, is part of the local economy, is affected by zoning and housing policies, etc.
  - Buck was pleased with the presentation of material in Chapters 3 and 4, which she thought provided a detailed, readable, and informative review of natural systems, concerns about them, and actions to address these concerns. There was general agreement that these chapters are well done.
  - Kessel suggested an expanded account of the “Goals” for “surface water resources” in the table on p.3.1 and modifying the first of the associated “Policies for Decision Makers” to “Protect aquatic habitats, including wetlands and vernal pools”.
  - Kessel asked why the qualification “not under town ownership” appears in first of the “Challenges,” p.3.2: “Preservation of healthy natural systems on land not under town ownership.” Painter explained that this merely identifies a challenge to achieving the general goal of preserving healthy natural systems in town: what the Town can do to protect healthy natural systems is more limited on private or state land than on its own land.
  - To the “Examples of resources and ecosystem services,” p.3.3, Kessel suggested adding

the role of forests in building soils.

- Kessel thought that the interconnectivity of water resources should be mentioned in “Section 3, Water Resources,” p.3.7. (Cf. Robert Thorsen’s Op-ed “Private Property Rights Trumped by Nature,” *Hartford Courant*, 3/06/14.)
- According to Kessel, there are more than two stream-segments that should be identified as “impaired” in “d) Water Quality,” p.3.11.
- Lehmann wondered why responsibility for promoting good forest management and stewardship was assigned to “a subcommittee of either the Open Space Preservation Committee or the Agriculture Committee,” p.3.24, rather than to some wider group. Painter said the PZC didn’t want to multiply committees beyond necessity.
- Soares suggested that the definition of “working lands” come sooner than p.4.5, since the phrase appears in the title of Chapter 4.
- Lehmann noted that the second bulleted policy decision – “Protect land with conservation easements instead of purchase, if possible” – associated with “Mansfield continues to pursue protection of key open space and working lands,” p.4.2, is not supported by any subsequent text and wondered about its rationale. Painter thought it probably reflected concern about the best use of limited financial resources. Soares suggested rewording the bullet to something like “Protect land with conservation easements or purchase, as appropriate.”
- Lehmann observed that Schoolhouse Brook Park does not appear in Table 4.1, though it is mentioned in Table 4.2 (as the site of Bicentennial Pond) and in Table 4.4.
- Kessel indicated that some of the maps in Chapters 3 and 4 are not accurate.
- Kessel suggested that funds for open space acquisition be included in the capital improvement budget, p.11.11.
- Lehmann commented that, unlike previous planning documents of this sort, which are weak on how the Town might actually achieve desired ends, the draft Plan is forthright about the failure of 2-acre zoning to preserve rural character (p.6.14) and suggests alternatives that could be more effective, such as mandating real clustering in subdivisions through natural resource protection zoning (NRPZ), p.6.35, and requiring larger (3-5 acre) lots with more frontage outside village areas, p.6.36.
- Facchinetti was pleased to see some recognition of the potential negative environmental impacts of agriculture (e.g., “Support and promote environmentally sensitive farming practices,” D.10, p.4.24; “Landscape practices by private homeowners and by agricultural and forest enterprises – fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, animal waste – can also be a source of non-point pollution,” p.5.11).

It was suggested that Commission members might profitably read more of the draft Plan, particularly Chapter 10 (“Future Land Use, Community Design, and Zoning”) and Chapter 11 (“Stewardship and Implementation”).

**5. Adjourned** at 9:13p.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 21 March 2014; approved 21 May 2014.