

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 22 October 2014
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
(draft) MINUTES

Members present: Aline Booth (Alt.), Neil Facchinetti, Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, Grant Meitzler, Michael Soares. *Members absent:* Joan Buck (Alt.), Robert Dahn, John Silander. *Others present:* Jennifer Kaufman (Wetlands Agent).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:32p by Kessel. Alternate Booth was designated a voting member for this meeting and “2015 Meeting Schedule” was added to the agenda. Grant Meitzler was enthusiastically welcomed as a new Commission member, replacing Peter Drzewiecki, when he arrived at 7:55p.

2. The draft **minutes** of the 17 September 2014 meeting, as revised on 22 September, were approved as written.

3. There were no **IWA referrals**. Because this meeting was moved from its regular third Wednesday (15 October 2014) to avoid a conflict with the annual meeting of Joshua’s Trust, the Commission missed the opportunity to comment on wetlands applications W1536, W1537, and W1538 referred to it by the Inland Wetlands Agency at its 06 October meeting.

4. 2015 Meeting Schedule. The 2015 meeting schedule prepared by Jesse Neborsky was unanimously approved: the Commission will, as usual, meet at 7:30p on the third Wednesday of each month.

5. Monitoring Conservation Easements. According to Planning, Acquisition, and Management Guidelines adopted by the Town Council in 2009, “The Conservation Commission, with staff assistance, shall be responsible for periodically monitoring Mansfield’s existing Conservation Easements.” It has been some time since any of the land protected by conservation easements has been inspected by the Commission to verify that the terms of the easement have been respected. The Commission needs to develop and execute a plan for carrying out the mandated monitoring.

Kaufman distributed a list of conservation easements, a map on which some of them can be located, an old “Mansfield Conservation Easement Monitoring/Inspection Report Form,” and copies of the “Inspection Report” and “Annual Monitoring Report” forms for land in the Connecticut Agricultural Land Preservation Program. To this material Kessel added copies of instructions for monitoring conservation easements drafted by Joshua’s Trust (letter dated 22 September 2014), along with its “Conservation Restriction Monitoring Report” form.

Kaufman plans to send a letter to those whose property is covered by a Town conservation easement, reminding them that the easement legally requires certain things of them and indicating that they should expect periodic inspections to monitor compliance with its terms. Soares volunteered to assist in drafting such a letter and developing an easement inspection form. The Commission agreed that it would be nice to have rough drafts of these at the November meeting.

In addition to getting the general letter, individual owners should be contacted in advance by letter or phone to schedule an inspection. This will require getting contact information.

It was agreed that late winter and early spring, when foliage is gone, is probably the best time to do inspections, and that the Commission should aim to begin doing them in March 2015. The

number actually done next year should give the Commission a better idea of how frequently properties can realistically be monitored. If the boundaries of an easement are not marked in the field, it could be difficult and time-consuming to determine just what is subject to inspection.

6. Eagleville Lake fanwort control: background. According to Kaufman, the spread of fanwort in Eagleville Lake was brought to the attention of Mansfield and Coventry by the Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, which recommended using herbicide to control the invasive plant. The other options are mechanical removal or a benthic barrier. Each option has drawbacks. Since the Willimantic River flows through the lake, herbicide would be washed downstream; mechanical removal would require drawing down the lake, which isn't good for the aquatic ecosystem and would require a permit; a benthic barrier could exclude fanwort from only part of the lake. Facchinetti noted that use of the proposed herbicide in Massachusetts is limited to ponds with no outlet. Kaufman thought that Mansfield and Coventry should probably commission a study to determine whether herbicide treatment is really the best option before proceeding with it.

7. UConn Master Plan. Information about UConn's draft 2014 Master Plan will be presented from 6:30 – 8:00p on Thursday, 30 October, in the Council Chambers.

8. Economic value of open space. Kessel noted that UConn Economics Professor Fred Carstenson was to speak elsewhere in Connecticut on the economic value of open space. The Commission agreed that he should be approached about giving a similar talk here in Mansfield.

9. Mansfield Tomorrow. Booth asked if the Commission was going to get copies of the conservation sections of the new draft Plan of Conservation and Development for review. Kaufman assured her that they will be forthcoming.

10. Adjourned at 8:35p. Next meeting: 7:30p, Wednesday, 19 November 2014.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 31 October 2014.