

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 21 January 2015
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
MINUTES

Members present: Aline Booth (Alt.), Joan Buck (Alt.), Robert Dahn, Neil Facchinetti, Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, Grant Meitzler, John Silander, Michael Soares. *Members absent:* none.
Others present: Jennifer Kaufman (Wetlands Agent).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:35p by Kessel.
2. The draft **minutes** of the 17 December 2014 meeting were approved as written.

3. Fanwort control in Eagleville Lake.

Fanwort is an invasive aquatic plant, now present in 60 acres of Eagleville Lake. Unchecked infestations displace native species, threatening water quality and aquatic life as decaying mats of vegetation remove oxygen from the water; in consequence, fanwort invasions threaten the recreational, aesthetic, and real-estate values of lakes. The recommended control is treatment with the herbicide flumioxazin; biological control is not feasible at this time.

Mansfield and Coventry have been awarded a \$14K grant from DEEP to initiate fanwort control in Eagleville Lake. The grant must be matched with \$7K from each town. If the Town accepts the grant, its \$7K matching share would be taken from the Open Space Fund. The grant would cover an initial herbicide treatment. However, there is no “final solution” to the fanwort problem: long-term control would require monitoring and additional treatments as needed, and the Town would need to budget for these.

Kaufman distributed a 01/20/15 draft Agenda Item Summary for the Town Council, which reviewed the history of this issue and recommended that the Town accept the grant. She requested that the Commission weigh in on this issue. To initiate discussion Kessel **moved** (Dahn seconded):

That the first sentence of final paragraph of the “Subject matter/Background” section of the Agenda Item Summary be altered to read: “The Open Space Preservation Committee and the Conservation Commission have reviewed this grant application.”

This paragraph continues: “While they would rather not use herbicides, they realize that this is the most effective way to handle this infestation initially. They encourage the use of an integrated pest management approach. Additionally, they are opposed to using the Open Space Fund for management of fanwort.”

Several concerns were raised in discussion:

- Facchinetti opposed use of flumioxazin to control fanwort in Eagleville Lake, pointing out that Massachusetts prohibits use of this herbicide in lakes with an outflow – and in other cases requires a more cautious treatment regimen than the one proposed here. Kaufman reported that, according to Aquatic Control Technology (the company that would apply the herbicide), the more stringent Massachusetts protocols reflect uncertainty about the effects of the herbicide on certain endangered invertebrates that are not present in Eagleville Lake.
- Money set aside for open space acquisition should not be diverted to other projects, like this one.
- Meitzler worried about an open-ended commitment by the Town to control fanwort in

Eagleville Lake, pointing out that the lake is owned by the state. If the Town goes ahead, it will be crucial to monitor and assess the program carefully. Dahn asked if accepting the grant carries any commitment to continue control after the initial treatment. Kaufman said, "No." Silander suggested that lakeside property owners in Coventry should shoulder some of the financial burden of continuing treatment.

- Buck wondered what was known about the use of flumioxazin to control fanwort in other Connecticut lakes: was it effective? what side-effects did it have? Kaufman did not have this information and may not be able to get it before the Council meets on 25 January.

In the end, despite these misgivings, Kessel's motion was **approved** (for: Kessel, Lehmann, Meitzler, Silander, Soares; against: Dahn, Facchinetti).

4. Agronomy Farm. Facchinetti summarized DEEP's recommendations and actions regarding pesticide use at the UConn Agronomy Farm. He is concerned that water from monitoring wells is being tested for pesticides only once a year, that the irrigation pond remains untested, and that experimental pesticides may elude discovery because those testing water samples don't know what to look for. Facchinetti was encouraged to draft a letter to the Town Council on these issues that the Commission could consider at a future meeting.

5. Water System Advisory Committee. Buck attended the last meeting of this committee, which is overseeing importation of Connecticut Water Company water. The water main from Tolland to Four Corners & UConn will generally run underneath route 195; installation of pipe will start near Storrs Congregational Church (perhaps at the end of 2016) and proceed to Tolland. There is some question whether an EIE is needed. Buck is encouraged that planning appears to be an open process in which public input is welcomed.

6. UConn Master Plan. Town Planner Linda Painter has drafted a letter from the Town to UConn concerning the university's draft Master Plan. It will be considered at the 1/25/15 meeting of the Town Council, which Kessel will attend. Comments solicited from the Commission and other Town committees are attached to the draft letter.

7. Mansfield Tomorrow. Booth reported having promoted dark skies in the Zoning Focus Group, as well as clustered development in limited areas where feasible. She would like to see more emphasis on the importance of wetlands in the new Plan of Conservation & Development (PoCD).

Kaufman distributed a grayscale print-out of Painter's power-point presentation "Mansfield Tomorrow: Our Plan, Our Future," along with material from Chapter 8 ("Future land use and community design"). Urging Commission members to see the full-color power-point presentation at 7:00p on 5 February at the Mansfield Middle School, she then briefly outlined the content of the draft PoCD chapter-by-chapter. The Commission will probably be most interested in commenting on Chapter 8. Soares is concerned that Map 8.3 could be interpreted as limiting conservation efforts to areas identified as "Conservation/recreation land." He and Kessel will prepare draft comments for discussion at the February meeting; these could be sent out with the packet. Other Commission members were encouraged to read relevant sections of the draft PoCD and to draft comments as well. Unless a special meeting is scheduled, its February meeting will be the Commission's last opportunity to comment on the draft PoCD to the PZC before the public hearing on 2 March.

8. Adjourned at 9:28p. Next meeting: 7:30p, Wednesday, 15 February 2015.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 22 January 2015; approved 18 February 2015.