

Town of Mansfield  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
Meeting of 19 June 2019  
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building  
**(draft) MINUTES**

*Members present:* Quentin Kessel, Erin King, Mary Harper, Scott Lehmann, Chadwick Rittenhouse (Alt.), Michael Soares. *Members absent:* John Silander. *Others present:* Jennifer Kaufman (Wetlands Agent).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at approximately 7:05p by Chair Michael Soares. In the absence of one member, Alternate Rittenhouse was entitled to vote at this meeting.

2. **Draft minutes** of the meeting of 17 April 2019 and **notes** of the special meeting of 22 April 2019 were approved as written.

3. **Sustainable CT: equity.** Some Town activities/actions promoting equity are required for Sustainable CT certification. The Town Manager is asking Town committees to look at data in the 2018 CERC Town Profile of Mansfield and to reflect on what population groups affected by the committee's work are not being heard and what might be done to improve engagement.

The Profile reveals peculiarities of Mansfield induced by UConn's presence: a low median age of 21, a surprisingly high poverty rate of 16.8%, an Asian population of 2,870 that accounts for nearly half of this demographic in Tolland County, a high rate (65.5%) of "cost-burdened renters."

While most students are just passing through, more might be done to engage them. Students in relevant fields might be induced to join the Commission, as was Julia Rogers and (we hope) Genevieve Rigler. {Cooperating with UConn student organizations on projects such as UConnPIRG's "Save the Bees" campaign is another possibility.} Perhaps walks in the Town Parks could be designed for and promoted to Asian families. The Town website could be more inviting; there should certainly be a page soliciting volunteers for various committees and projects.

4. **IWA referral: W1349-2 (Roby, 110 Brookside La).** The applicant, who currently accesses his house via a right-of-way on a neighbor's property, proposes to construct a new gravel driveway across a wetland on his own property; two 18" culverts would be installed in an existing channel at the wetland's narrowest point. This is a renewal application, but differs from the initial one enough to require review. The new design involves less excavation and fill. However, instead of restoring the wetland at the existing crossing on his neighbor's property, the applicant proposes, by way of remediation, to remove Japanese barberry in 11,500 ft<sup>2</sup> of wetland on his property.

Lehmann asked why "no action" wasn't considered in Part E –Alternatives, given that the applicant now has a legal right-of-way to the house. Kaufman explained that he and his neighbor are adversaries in a civil action. Rittenhouse wondered what effect the proposed barberry removal would have on wetland function. Soares doubted that ridding a relatively small area of barberry would be effective, unless replanted with native species and maintained: barberry is invasive. Harper questioned the wisdom of allowing herbicide to be sprayed in the wetland, as contemplated in soil scientist Richard Zulick's report (p.3). Kaufman indicated that herbicide application in a wetland requires a permit. The Commission unanimously agreed (**motion:** Kessel, Soares) to comment that:

This project may have a significant impact on wetlands, and it is not clear that the proposed

remediation would compensate for it. Use of culverts avoids fragmenting the wetland and may maintain its hydrological function.; however, 2,300 ft<sup>2</sup> of wetland would be filled. The IWA should request a more detailed remediation plan that (1) considers a range of alternative actions, (2) makes a case for the preferred alternative in terms of effectively enhancing wetland function & value over time, and (3) describes just what will be done and for how long.

**5. UConn ice hockey arena.** UConn is proposing to construct an ice hockey arena (with seating for 2,500) adjacent to the Freitas Ice Forum on a portion what is now I-Lot (which would be enlarged to accommodate another 700 vehicles). The Town has no authority over this project, but has drafted a letter commenting on its likely negative impact on wetlands, storm-water runoff, and traffic.

Lehmann noted that a large piece of forest would be sacrificed to enlarge I-lot. Harper wondered why the Depot Campus couldn't be utilized for off-site University parking served by shuttle bus; moving parking off-campus would reduce all of the impacts of this project noted in the Town's letter. Rittenhouse suggested the wetlands in the project area be studied to ascertain whether they are isolated or connected by groundwater and to inform the design of the project; for example, could impact on wetlands be lessened by dividing the parking lot?

The Commission unanimously agreed (**motion:** Harper, Rittenhouse) to recommend that (1) a study of wetlands in the project area be undertaken to inform design of the project with a view to minimizing its impact on them and (2) use of the Depot Campus for Park & Ride be explored as a way of reducing impacts on traffic, runoff, and wetlands.

**6. Conservation easement monitoring.** Electronic monitoring with Survey123 is definitely worth considering.

**7. Membership.** It's not clear whether Genevieve Rigler has been appointed to the Commission as an Alternate.

**8. Adjourned** at 8:37p. The July meeting may be cancelled if there are no wetlands applications needing scrutiny.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 24 June 2019