

Conservation Commission
Minutes of the November 17, 2004 Meeting
Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Building

Present: Denise Burchsted, Robert Dahn (chair), Jennifer Kaufman, Quentin Kessel, and John Silander.

Absent: Lanse Minkler, Robert Thorson, and Frank Trainor.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
2. Kessel discussed comments on the September 15, 2004 minutes made by Minkler and Thorson, many of which have now been incorporated into these minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously. The minutes of the October 20 meeting were then discussed and, subject to an editorial change, approved unanimously.
3. Burchsted, who also serves as the Executive Director for the Naubesatuck Watershed Council (NWC), described the NWC as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose purpose is to protect and enhance the beauty, biotic diversity, and ecological interactions, structures and processes of the three rive system consisting of the Fenton, Mount Hope and Natchaug Rivers empty into Naubesatuck Lake. This watershed is also known by the DEP as Basin #32 and by the city of Willimantic as the Windham Waterworks Watershed, the State's largest surface watershed. One of the goals of NWC is to build awareness of the watershed's importance and to coordinate activities across municiple boundaries.

Burchsted also discussed NWC's Watershed Plan of Conservation, dated June 12, 2004 (revised July 29, 2004). She noted that the Green Valley Institute wants the three rivers to receive "Greenway Status," a designation that might bring additional funding for the watershed's conservation.
4. Stone Walls: Silander expressed frustration with the destruction of stone walls that he has observed. It was pointed out that while the Town could not dictate stone wall preservation to an individual homeowner, the PZC did have some influence when subdivisions came before it for approval. Note was taken of the October 20, 2004 meeting and minutes discussing the need of incorporation of guidelines for the preservation of stone walls into the new Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development.
5. It was noted that the Town has passed a resolution supporting "LEED" standards, which have been developed by the US Green Building Council to help guide sustainable design for buildings. Silander asked whether the Mansfield Downtown Partnership construction would be held to LEED's standards. Burchsted reported that the Mansfield's CFRG is pushing to have the new construction done to these standards, but that it was not clear that the Partnership was as enthusiastic about implementing these

standards. Burchsted was asked to write a letter for the CC to send to the Town Council in support of the adoption of LEED standards by the Partnership.

6. Open Space: Kaufman reported that the Town has received a grant from the DEP for the purchase of approximately 60 acres of the Dorwart property. This is an important open space acquisition that will provide a connection between the Lion's Club Field area and the protected Coney Rock property. From there a hiker can easily access the Town's Fifty Foot property and hike onto the Old Town Hall.

Kaufman also reported that a Recreational Trails Program Grant has been awarded to the Town for trail improvements and a canoe launch on the Willimantic River. She is also working with the PAC to develop an invasive species policy for the Town.

7. Plan of Conservation and Development: The CC discussed various aspects of the proposed plan. It was agreed to endorse the OSPC recommendation for the "Interior Forest Tract" designation for the map titled "Planned Conservation Areas" dated 2004 and prepared for the Town of Mansfield by the Windham Region council of Governments. These are:

1. The map should be corrected to exclude subdivisions with house lots of less than two acres from the Interior Forest Tract designation.

2. The 500 foot setback from collector streets and lesser streets should be removed from the map. It was noted that the automatic application of this setback inappropriately removed a major portion of forestland in Schoolhouse Brook Park from the Interior Forest Tract designation. A justification for this recommendation to remove the setback is that many deep-forest wildlife species (for example fishers) are adapting the existence of nearby roads, traffic and traffic noises. While it is true that select species may be unable to live and reproduce within 500 feet of a highway, there are many more for which it is not such an issue.

Additionally, the CC wishes to recommend Town develop a system of classification for stone walls within the town, and that such a taxonomy should be incorporated into the Town's revision of its Plan of Conservation and Development together with guidelines for the preservation of stone walls in Mansfield. Thorson distributed such a taxonomy for stone materials at the October CC meeting that he is incorporating into his new book, "Exploring Stone Walls, A Field Guide to Stone Walls."

The possible revision of the Town's Zoning Map to extend certain aspects of one-acre zoning into the Town's present two-acre zoning area was discussed. Most of the two-acre zoned area is designated that way for the protection of watersheds. Concern was expressed that the recent zone change, permitting shared driveways with frontage along the driveway substituting for the usual frontage requirement, was encouraging development of additional housing in areas where it would not have been economically feasible before this zone change. It was unclear to CC members how this recent change combined with the proposed one-acre changes would affect development in

Town. This is in part because Town Planner Greg Padick's presentation at the November meeting did not detail the proposed change and was supported primarily with anecdotal statements. The CC asked Kaufman meet with Padick before the December meeting to obtain more complete information on the proposed one-acre changes and to see whether actual data exists as to whether, or not, in the Town of Mansfield this won't lead to detrimental changes.

The secretary was instructed to bring this portion of the minutes to the attention of Town Planner Padick, the PZC and the Town Manager.

8. IWA Referrals.

a) W1276 - Dan Ouimette Builders, LLC - 557 Warrenton Road. Map date, revised 10/18/04. This application is for a single family dwelling within about 50 feet of a wetland. It was observed that the map showed the driveway being routed through an existing stone wall. The CC hopes that the removed stones will be used to repair and to complete the existing wall where the "path" currently passes through it. Kessel moved and Dahn seconded that there should be no significant negative impact on the wetlands if the sedimentation and erosion controls shown on the map are in place during the construction and removed after the site is stabilized. The motion passed with three in favor and one abstention.

b) W127 - McCarthy - Bassetts Bridge Road/452 Storrs Road. Map date 8/30/04. This application is for two office buildings with driveway/parking lots within about 30 feet of a wetland. Of primary concern is the driveway/parking lot runoff and its treatment before reaching the nearby wetland. The map seemed not to provide information about this. The septic fields are also located close to the wetland, and it was not discernable from the map provided which area was for the primary and which for the secondary septic field, if one exists. Silander moved and Kaufman seconded that, based on the information provided there could be a significant negative impact on the adjacent wetlands. The motion passed unanimously. Concern was also expressed for the abutting neighbors with regard to expanding the commercial use of this property.

10. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Quentin Kessel
Secretary