

Town of Mansfield  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
Meeting of 19 May 2010  
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building  
**MINUTES**

*Members present:* Robert Dahn, Peter Drzewiecki {from 8:00p}, Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, Frank Trainor. *Members absent:* John Silander, Joan Stevenson. *Others present:* Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent); Neil Faccinetti, John Rickards (Storrs Heights Neighborhood Assn., Agronomy Farm Committee).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:32p by Chair Quentin Kessel.

**2. Public Comment.** Eugene Roberts has responded to questions posted by Neil Faccinetti on his website concerning production and monitoring wells at UConn's Agronomy Farm. Mr. Faccinetti distributed a map showing the locations of these wells and a handout with the questions and answers, along with follow-up questions, which he summarized for the Commission.

- It remains unclear how the two failed production wells – one (MW-2) dry, the other (PW-2) collapsed – can supply useful information as monitoring wells. Accordingly, it appears that two additional deep monitoring wells are needed.
- It remains unclear how data will be collected from the monitoring wells, as no devices appear to be installed yet.
- What is the rationale for criteria announced for curtailing pumping? If they are based on the 3-day pump test performed in October 2009, they may be too permissive, since that test lasted only 3 days and did not occur in a dry season.
- Are water levels in the production wells going to be monitored in advance of any pumping from them, so as to establish baseline water levels as a function of season?
- Concerning the monitoring program for water quality utilizing shallow wells, how often will water be tested? how will test results be made available to interested parties? which “agricultural chemicals” will be applied to the fields and which will be tested for?
- Has the Agronomy Farm developed contingency plans and SOPs for dealing with adverse situations that may arise?

Kessel reported that the Town-Gown Committee has decided that it is the most suitable forum for a Q&A session on Agronomy Farm water issues, probably at its meeting on 6/8/10. {Mr. Faccinetti & Mr. Rickards left the meeting.}

3. The draft **minutes of the 21 April 2010 meeting** were approved, with the substitution of “Can data from these defective wells really indicate whether the new production wells are mining groundwater (i.e., withdrawal rate exceeds recharge rate)?” for the garbled second sentence of the first bullet in item 2.

**4. IWA referral: W1453 (Gottman, Gurleyville Rd).** The applicants propose to add to the back of their house a large deck, which would be about 63' from a wetland at its closest point. The Commission unanimously agreed (**motion:** Dahn, Trainor) that no significant impact on the wetland is likely, provided care is taken in drilling holes for the support posts.

**5. Charter Communications box lights.** Some people apparently don't find the green LEDs on Charter Communications' pole boxes as fascinating as Gatsby found the green light that beckoned from the end of Daisy's dock in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel. However, among those present, there was not sufficient interest in complaining about them to Charter.

**6. Communication policy.** Kessel and other Commission members have been invited to a meeting of the Committee on Committees at 7:00p on June 21 to discuss the Council's request that advisory committees and commissions not communicate with outside agencies.

## **7. PZC referrals.**

**a. Invasive plant species.** The Commission applauds proposed revisions to the zoning and subdivision regulations that would prohibit use of invasive species (as determined by the DEP) in landscaping.

**b. Aquifer and public water supply well protection.** The Commission likewise approves of proposed revisions to zoning and subdivision regulations that would give more prominence to protecting aquifers and public water supply wells.

**c. Pleasant Valley rezoning.** Concerning the proposed rezoning of the area south of Pleasant Valley Road, the Commission unanimously agreed (**motion:** Kessel, Dahn) to make the following comments:

- The Commission supports requiring a 500' setback from Pleasant Valley Road for development in the PVRA and PVCA zones to preserve existing agricultural land and scenic vistas.
- The Commission supports authorizing the PZC to require designating up to 50% of prime agricultural land for permanent agricultural use in developments proposed for the PVRA and PVCA zones. It urges the PZC to attempt to coordinate these designations with the 500' setback so that preserved agricultural land is, to the extent possible, not fragmented.
- The Commission notes that the only kind of development expressly prohibited in the PVCA zone is "auto salvage operations" (U.3.h). Whether we get development that does protect this area's "special agricultural, floodplain, wetland, and aquifer characteristics" and "scenic character" (U.1) will depend on how the PZC exercises its considerable discretion.

## **8. UConn drainage issues.**

**a. Mirror Lake dredging.** Kessel will draft and circulate a letter to UConn, DEP, and Baystate Environmental Consultants, thanking them for responding to the Commission's questions and concerns about this project.

**b. Swan Lake outfall.** Yesterday Rich Miller responded to DEP's 4/20/10 request that he address concerns raised in the Commission's letter of 3/17/10. In his response to Denise Ruzicka, Mr. Miller:

- Concedes that the Swan Lake outfall to Valentine Meadow discharges into a watercourse, and corrects a contrary indication in UConn's application for a permit to undertake erosion control work at the outfall;
- Concedes that the outfall discharges within 100' of a watercourse that contributes to a public water supply, and that a DPH permit will be required for discharging runoff from "55 acres" of the Eagleville Brook watershed into the Roberts Brook

watershed via Swan Lake, as proposed in UConn's storm-water management plan;

- Notes that no DEP permit was required for diverting runoff from the Swan Lake watershed into Roberts Brook by raising the Swan Lake outlet to Eagleville Brook in 1990, since the Swan Lake watershed is only 16 acres, well below the 100-acre minimum for diversions requiring DEP permits.
- Notes that no DPH discharge permit for this 1990 diversion was obtained and reports that DPH will not grant one retroactively – suggesting that discharges resulting from the 1990 diversion are (legally speaking) now so much water over the dam.
- Provides documentation to show that the Town did receive timely notice (8/17/09) of UConn's permit application to DEP for erosion control work at the Swan Lake outfall.
- Observes that the Commission received a copy of this application in its 12/16/09 meeting packet and that the permit was granted on 2/22/10, more than the legal minimum of 35 days after notice to local officials, even if the date of such notice is set at 12/16/09 rather than 8/17/09.

Kessel distributed the draft of a response to DEP, which Commission members should review before the June meeting.

**c. Eagleville Brook TMDL.** A public information session on steps to reduce pollution and sedimentation in Eagleville Brook will be held from 09:30 – 12:00 on 6/4/10. Someone from the Commission should attend, but Kessel cannot do so.

**9. Adjourned** at 9:25p. Next meeting: 7:30p, Wednesday, 16 June 2010

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 21 May 2010; approved 21 July 2010