

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 21 July 2010
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
MINUTES

Members present: Joan Buck (Alt.), Robert Dahn (from 7:50p), Neil Facchinetti (Alt.), Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann. *Members absent:* Peter Drzewiecki, John Silander, Joan Stevenson, Frank Trainor.. *Others present:* Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent); Stephen Baker (homeowner) and Fran Raiola (Fire Marshall's office) regarding W1459.

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:32p by Chair Quentin Kessel, who welcomed new alternate members Joan Buck and Neil Facchinetti to the Commission.

2. The draft **minutes of the 19 May meeting** were approved as written; the draft **minutes of the 16 June meeting** were approved with minor editorial changes.

3. IWA referral: W1459 (Baker, Thornbush Rd.) Mr. Baker's house is in the Willimantic River flood zone and has had a history of insurance claims for water damage. He has received a FEMA 90:10 grant to raise the finished level of the house 3' above the 100-year flood level. This will be done by jacking up the existing house and pouring a new foundation underneath. Its walls will have openings, allowing flood-water to flow into (and out of) empty basement space to counteract buoyancy.

The IWA referral covers a proposed 60' x 10' porch on the front of the house (which is within 150' of wetlands), supported by 6' x 6' posts anchored to concrete pilings. The Commission agreed that this project was unlikely to have any significant wetlands impact (motion: Facchinetti, Buck; all but Dahn – who was not yet present – voting affirmatively). Mssrs. Baker and Raiola left the meeting.

4. Committee on Committees meeting. On 19 July, Kessel and Lehmann met with the Committee on Committees regarding the Town Council's "Policy regarding advisory committees' communications with outside agencies." This policy requests that comments from advisory committees on issues of "town-wide importance" be communicated to "the Town Council or Town Manager and not to State or private parties."

The Committee appeared to concede that the stated rationale for the policy – to eliminate "confusion over the Town's position" – would be served by a less onerous requirement that communications with outside agencies state that the views expressed were those of the advisory committee and not necessarily the Town. However, the Commission was unable to secure any relief from the policy. Kessel argued that it hampers the Commission's ability to respond in a timely way to issues of concern, but the Committee didn't see why a letter to the DEP (say) couldn't be copied to the Town Manager or Town Planner before being sent. Kessel agreed to do give this a try.

5. CL&P Interstate Reliability Project. The PZC has been asked by residents of Hawthorne Lane to approve relocating CL&P's right-of-way (ROW) closer to Bassetts Bridge Road so that trees on their properties would not be cleared to make way for CL&P's proposed new 345 kV line. The new ROW would include the Hawthorne Lane cul-de-sac and 0.35 acres of conservation easement. After some discussion, the Commission unanimously agreed (motion: Kessel, Lehmann) to offer the following

comments:

- The Commission does not understand why the Town should give up a 0.35 acre conservation easement to provide approximately 2.5 acres of easement-free land to the Hawthorne Lane homeowners. Accordingly, the Commission suggests that a conservation easement be granted to the Town on land removed from the present ROW as a condition of approving its relocation.
- The Commission observes that the proposed relocation is supported by those with the most to gain from it, and hopes that the PZC will solicit opinion from other nearby landowners before making a decision.
- The Commission is disappointed that CL&P continues to prefer this route through northeast Connecticut to less environmentally costly alternatives and to prefer a second column of poles to a single pylon installation requiring less additional tree-clearing.
- It is unclear to the Commission why the area to be cleared through Mansfield Hollow State Park need extend beyond the currently cleared area shown on CL&P's map.

6. Swan Lake discharge. DPH has granted a "Stormwater Discharge Permit" for erosion-control improvements at the Swan Lake outfall above Valentine Meadow. These improvements could enable the outfall to handle increased storm flows from UConn's proposed diversion of runoff from 44 acres in the Eagleville Brook watershed to the Fenton River watershed. However, this diversion would require a DPH permit, and it's hard to see how one could legally be granted, since it would approve discharging polluted water into a public water supply watershed.

7. Agronomy Farm. Residents of Storrs Heights participated in a productive Q&A session on turf research at the UConn Agronomy Farm during the 8 June Town-Gown Committee meeting. They are preparing follow-up questions for the Committee's 10 August meeting.

8. Adjourned at 8:55p. Next meeting: 7:30p, Wednesday, 18 August 2010

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 26 July 2010; revised 16 August; approved 18 August 2010.