

Town of Mansfield  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
Meeting of 16 March 2011  
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building  
**(draft) MINUTES**

*Members present:* Peter Drzewiecki, Neil Facchinetti (Alt.), Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, John Silander, Frank Trainor. *Members absent:* Joan Buck (Alt.), Robert Dahn. *Others present:* Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:36p by Chair Quentin Kessel.
2. The draft **minutes of the 16 February 2011 meeting**, with revisions of items 5 and 7c, were approved.
3. **IWA referrals.**

a. **W1474 (Plimpton, Wormwood Hill & Gurleyville Rds)** The applicant proposes to split 43 interior acres into 3 back lots: Lot 2 (5.3 acres) and Lot 3 (4.8 acres) would be accessed by a common driveway from Gurleyville Road passing between 3 existing houses, Lot 4 (32.9 acres) by a long driveway from Wormwood Hill Road passing between 2 existing houses. The yield plan secures the required frontage by replacing the common driveway with a road that extends to a cul de sac on the edge of Lot 4; actual frontage for the proposed subdivision, however, would be only the sum of the widths of the two narrow driveway corridors. A large wetland 80 vertical ft. below and some distance from the house site on Lot 4 is included in a 19-acre conservation easement. The end of the common driveway and Lot 2's house are about 70 ft from the southwest end of a wetland that may be a vernal pool.

After some discussion, the Commission unanimously agreed on the following comment (**motion:** Silander, Trainor):

The Commission suggests (1) that the house on Lot 2 be moved farther from the wetland lying to the northeast and (2) that the conservation easement on Lot 4 be enlarged by moving its eastern boundary farther up the slope to increase protection of the large wetland below from logging and other activities.

The Commission observes (a) that the common driveway provision of the subdivision regulations is again being used to enable development at less expense to the developer with no off-setting environmental gain from clustering, (b) that some stone walls will apparently be disturbed by construction, and (c) that no open space calculation has been provided. It hopes that disturbed stone walls will be rebuilt as required and that the open space calculation, when done, will take account of previous lots carved out of the Plimpton property.

{Lehmann visited this site on the 02/15 IWA Field Trip; his report is attached.}

b. **W1469 (Town of Mansfield, Statutory Regulation Revision).** No action necessary (cf. Commission minutes for 01/19/11, item 3b).

4. Kessel reported on various meetings, presentations, and hearings.

a. Kessel attended a recent meeting of the Town's **Open Space Acquisition Committee**, which oversees acquisition of Town open-space land and considers requests from other parties – such as the White Oak Condominium Association – to purchase, lease, or exchange parcels. He urged the Committee to use some of the Town's \$1M open-space bonding authority to purchase of conservation easements on large tracts of interior forest (cf. Commission minutes for 11/17/10, item 7). He reported that the Downtown Partnership plans to deed the significant open space component of the Storrs Center development to the Town; this may enable a trail to be routed, largely on preserved land, from the Center to the Nipmuck Trail along the Fenton River.

b. Having attended a Green Valley Institute presentation on 02/28/11 concerning **light pollution**, Kessel suggested that the Commission might approach the University of Connecticut about improving lighting to lessen its impact on the night sky.

c. On behalf of the Naubesatuck Watershed Council, Kessel testified at a hearing before the Legislature's Commerce Committee on a bill that would vitiate the DEP's proposed **streamflow regulations**, which are designed to avoid the sort of drawdowns that left the Fenton River dry several summers ago. Unfortunately, the bill was passed out of committee by a lopsided vote.

5. **Natchaug River Basin Conservation Compact.** The Town Council will take this up at its 3/28/11 meeting. Kessel will attend and urge that Mansfield sign on (see Commission minutes for 02/16/11, item 4).

6. **Swan Lake diversion.** On 02/28/11, the DEP notified UConn that the MOA will be amended to avoid diverting runoff to the Fenton River via Swan Lake, provided the University can sufficiently reduce the TMDL in Eagleville Brook in other ways (primarily by reducing runoff, through installation of green roofs, porous pavement, etc.).

7. **Ponde Place.** The developers plan to pump-test a new well to see if enough water is available to permit the now scaled-down project to be enlarged; a monitoring well has been drilled to assess the impact of drawdown on nearby wells.

8. **Adjourned** at 8:51p.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 18 March 2011

**Attachment:** Report on 03/15/11 IWA Field Trip.

IWA 1474 (Plimpton, Wormwood Hill & Gurleyville Roads). A 3-lot subdivision is proposed for 43 interior acres off Wormwood Hill and Gurleyville Roads.

A 32.9 acre backlot (numbered 4) would be accessed by a long driveway ascending from Wormwood Hill Road (between two existing houses) along the path of an old woods road. We did not walk to the house site. This lot does not appear to raise wetland issues: house & septic system would be located at considerable distance from, and about 80 vertical ft above, a large wetland, which would be protected by a 19-acre conservation easement.

The remaining two backlots (numbered 2 and 3 – 5.3 and 4.8 acres respectively) would be accessed by a common driveway (running between three existing houses) off Gurleyville Road. The interior end of this common driveway is close – around 60 ft – to a wetland that may be a vernal pool. (It did not have a particularly vernal aspect when we saw it, being still partially ice-covered.) The house proposed for Lot 2 is also about 60 ft from this wetland. A minimum distance to wetlands of 100 ft is recommended for vernal pools; both the driveway and this house could be moved to honor this recommendation. There is also a small area near Gurleyville Road and about 70 ft from the proposed driveway entrance that was submerged when we visited -- probably runoff dammed by the next driveway to the east. Development proposed for Lot 3 is not as close to wetlands as the house on Lot 2.

Logging on Lots 2 and 3 this past fall removed every tree of value from the area; only spindly specimens remain. Apparently these lots will be marketed to people who prefer acres of lawn.