

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 17 August 2011
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
MINUTES

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

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:38p by Acting Chair Joan Buck. Aline Booth was introduced as a new alternate; Neil Facchinetti has been elevated from alternate to member.

2. The draft **minutes of the 20 July 2011 meeting** were approved as written.

3. IWA referrals. Lehmann participated in the 26 August IWA Field Trip; his report is attached.

a. **W1485 (Bell, 552 Bassetts Bridge Rd.)** The applicants propose to construct a tool barn about 100 ft from a wetland; runoff at this site drains away from the wetland, and the facility falls under the farming exemption anyway. Also proposed is conversion of a small existing barn into a wedding facility: the barn would be modestly enlarged by addition of restrooms and food preparation area and an existing pergola would be extended to it. The wetland mentioned above is about 80 ft from the proposed work at its closest point; the site is flat and the wetland is on the other side of the existing driveway. Wedding-associated parking would not be a problem for wetlands, in Meitzler's view. Facchinetti wondered if the applicants intend to control mosquitoes by spraying; pesticides could impact wetlands. The applicants are preparing a revised application with a more adequate map, and after some discussion the Commission agreed unanimously (**motion:** Buck, Facchinetti) to review it, when available, with special attention to plans for pesticide and herbicide applications.

b. **W1486 (Gore/Wright, 166 Baxter Rd.)** A 14'x17' sunroom, supported by three pier footings, would be added to an existing house; its closest corner would be approximately 125 ft from a wetland. While the slope down to the wetland is fairly steep, the Commission unanimously agreed (**motion:** Booth, Trainor) that no significant wetland impact is anticipated, provided silt fencing as shown on the map is in place during construction and is removed only after the site is stabilized.

4. Merrow Mill tree cutting. Eric Thomas of DEEP noted some tree-cutting near the Merrow Mill site on the Willimantic River and brought it to Meitzler's attention. Several trees in front of a red house have been felled down the steep slope above the river. Meitzler suspects that they were cut to admit more light into the house or to clean up storm damage, but he has not found anyone at home to talk with about it. Although this is a very scenic section of the river and the activity is visible from a trail on the Coventry side, it is not clear that the Town has any legal leverage to prohibit or regulate tree-cutting here. Consideration of regulations to protect streamsides may be in order. The Commission unanimously agreed (**motion:** Buck, Booth) to submit a letter to the homeowner, indicating that the Commission has noted tree-cutting on a steep slope above the Willimantic River near the Merrow Mill site, and, as a body concerned about water quality and the scenic and recreational values of the river, would like to know what his/her intentions are.

5. Dark Skies. William Shakalis has been invited to report to the Commission at its September meeting on what he has discovered about state and local lighting ordinances. Meitzler noted that PZC regulations now require lighting plans that aim at no light spillover beyond the property line.

6. Mirror Lake. Vegetation is being removed from Mirror Lake with small dredges and human hands.

7. Ponde Place. The Ponde Place developer has asked DPH to reconsider its denial of the original project. Wells drilled on the property failed an initial pump test: water produced was sufficient only for a scaled-back project. These wells were to be retested once monitoring wells were drilled to judge the effect of withdrawals on neighborhood wells. The developer was delighted to find that the monitoring wells appeared capable of supplying quite a lot of water, but DPH judged that they were likely to draw in pollution from the old UConn chemical landfill.

8. Interstate Reliability Project. A public forum on CL&P's proposal to run a second column of high voltage transmission lines through Mansfield will be held on 14 September from 6:00 – 8:00p at the Community Center.

9. Adjourned at 8:48p.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 22 August 2011; approved 21 September 2011.

Attachment: Report on 26 July IWA Field Trip

The Commission commented on IWA 1483 (Cumberland Farms, 4 Corners) and IWA 1484 (Kouatly, Fern Rd) at last week's meeting. I did not see anything at these sites suggesting that we should reconsider these applications at the August meeting. There is now a vast amount of impervious cover at Republic Oil and Kathy John's, which would be reduced by about 0.5 acres under the Cumberland Farms proposal, a definite improvement.

IWA 1485 (Bell, Bassetts Bridge Rd). The applicants want to build a small barn for machinery and develop facilities for weddings at their farm off Bassetts Bridge Rd ("The Gardens", featuring quite spectacular flower gardens). There is still no adequate map – one is promised – but even an adequate map is no substitute for a visit. The new barn would be constructed behind an existing greenhouse at some remove from the existing house; a small barn near the house would be somewhat enlarged and converted into a wedding facility with restrooms and food preparation area, and an existing pergola would be extended to it. There is a wetland across the unpaved driveway (on the left as you drive in) from the existing barn, perhaps 100 ft away from it. It is also about 80 ft from the proposed new barn, though the land on which that would be built slopes away from the wetland; according to Grant, this new barn may be exempt from wetland review anyway under the farming exemption. The wetland may overflow during heavy rain or spring runoff into a small artificial pond just off the driveway a bit closer to Bassetts Bridge Rd; whether the intervening area is wetland is not clear. In any case, I would expect any wetland impact from the project to be marginal, since it is limited to a flat, already developed area. However, a lot more traffic on the driveway might lead to increased sediment loads in runoff.

Scott Lehmann