

THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION (“NRC”) OF THE TOWN OF AVON
HELD A REGULAR MEETING ON MARCH 7, 2011 AT THE AVON TOWN HALL
BLDG 7 CONFERENCE ROOM (LOWER LEVEL)

Present were Steve Samul, Chairman, Bob Breckinridge, Susan May, Mary Harrop, Dan Schwartz, Barbra Chester and John E. McCahill, Planning and Community Development Specialist.

Terry Ryan was absent.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Samul called the meeting to order at 7:46 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

There being no corrections, Ms. Harrop made the motion to approve the minutes for January 13, 2011. The motion was seconded by Mr. Breckinridge. The minutes were approved by Steve Samul, Bob Breckinridge, Mary Harrop, Susan May, Barbra Chester and Dan Schwartz.

III. COMMUNICATIONS:

There was nothing new to report at this time.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Open Space/Conservation

Mr. McCahill stated that, in January, he sent an email to Bruce Williams, Director of Public Works, regarding the status of the proposed plans to extend the sidewalk on Scoville Road. Mr. Williams indicated that he has the proposed project in his 2011/2012 budget and that this will hopefully be a project for this summer. He continued by stating that Mr. Williams and Brandon Robertson, Town Manager, are both aware that the Natural Resources Commission, as well as other organizations in Town, are anxious to have the proposed project completed.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. New ideas/Projects/Proposals

Website – Communication/Information

Mr. Schwartz stated that there is no new information to report at this time. He continued by stating the Library has been very busy with the new Library project and he did not want to impose extra work upon them at this time. Mr. Schwartz will follow up with

Glenn Marston, Director of Recreation & Parks, and will have an update for the next Natural Resources Commission meeting on May 12th.

Mr. Samul asked if there were any other ideas for new projects.

Ms. Harrop inquired as to whether the Street Tree Sale will be held this year.

Mr. McCahill stated that last year, after some consideration, the Street Tree Sale was not held. It was the consensus of the Commission, at that time, that due to the previously low numbers of trees sold, the economic times, and a problem with the timing of the notification of the sale that the Street Tree Sale would be suspended for last spring. He continued by stating that the Commission had discussed coming up with some different ideas.

Mr. Schwartz stated that the Commission has not focused on the recycling part of the Commission's mission. He continued by stating that a Town sponsored recycling activity could be a possibility for the fall.

Ms. Harrop suggested that the Commission could place an article in the Town of Avon Newsletter reminding residents of acceptable items that can be recycled.

Mr. McCahill stated that he will contact Bob Martin's replacement at the Avon Landfill to arrange for him/her to speak at a Commission meeting.

Mr. Schwartz added that it would be helpful to include, in the article, that recyclable items are available in the swap shack at the landfill.

B. Trail Mapping

Mr. McCahill stated that he met with Mark Kasinskas, AICP, Environmental Planner and Forester with Ferrucci & Walicki LLC, to discuss putting together some trail maps suitable for public distribution for the properties covered in the Town's 2009 Natural Resources Inventory & Management Plan.

The properties include Alsop Meadows, Fisher Farms, Found Land, Hazen Park, and Huckleberry Hill. Mr. McCahill stated that he had requested that Countryside Park also be included.

Mr. McCahill stated that he had also met with Mr. Kasinskas and Sanjee Wallace, the Engineering Department's CAD/GIS Manager, to discuss the goals to be accomplished in updating the trail maps. Mr. McCahill stated he suggested that the Avon Land Trust trail map be used as a model. He continued by stating that two different approaches to developing trails maps were discussed. The first approach is to develop a brochure, similar to the Town of Avon Fisher Farm Open Space brochure, which would include a map, be low cost and easily reproducible. The second approach is to develop a "print & go" map which could be used as a "hiking type" trail map.

Mr. McCahill stated it would be prudent to create maps that could be easily accessed from the Town website.

Mr. McCahill stated it would be nice to see this proposed project come to fruition after more than ten years of discussion.

Mr. Schwartz stated that KML, which Mr. McCahill referred to, is the language (format) used by Google Earth to map coordinates when searching addresses.

Mr. McCahill stated that most, if not all of, the Town trails have been located with GPS.

Mr. Breckinridge inquired as to whether Hazen Park and/or other Avon Land Trust properties can be included in the proposed mapping.

Mr. McCahill stated that it could be considered. He suggested that if the Avon Land Trust has a GPS file of trail locations for their properties, that the file be forwarded to the Town Engineering Department to be integrated into the Town's GPS file for trail locations.

Mr. Schwartz stated that an objective to be considered for the brochure is to include some background/ history information, as well as, interesting points such as natural birds or plants that can be seen along the trails. He continued by stating that would not only make the brochure more interesting, it would help to preserve history.

Mr. McCahill clarified that there are two proposed projects being discussed; producing a printed brochure and creating trail maps which are accessible on the Town website.

Ms. Harrop inquired as to how this project will be funded.

Mr. McCahill responded by stating that this project will be funded through the Department of Public Works. He continued by stating that any funds generated from previous tree harvesting managed by Ferrucci & Walicki LLC for the Town, has been designated to a separate account to be used for managing Town open space properties. Mr. McCahill stated that every year, in keeping with the ten year forestry management plan entitled "Natural Resource Inventory & Management Plan", Ferrucci & Walicki LLC develops scopes of services that they would like to do each year, in coordination with the Public Works Department, and they utilize funds from this account. This year Ferrucci & Walicki LLC, as part of their proposal, would like to develop and update a number of brochures which include trail maps for the Town of Avon, open space properties.

Mr. McCahill stated that Ferrucci & Walicki LLC will include information in the brochures that would be of interest to this Commission and the general public. He continued by stating that Mr. Kasinskas is willing to come to the Natural Resources Commission meeting in May to discuss ideas and/or suggestions with the Commission.

Mr. McCahill continued by giving an update regarding the kiosks. He stated that, on February 28, 2011, he met with Steve Kushner, Director of Planning & Community Development, Glenn Marston, Director of Recreation & Parks, Bruce Williams, Director of Public Works, and Alex Trujillo, Deputy Director of Public Works, to discuss the kiosk inventory and future management of the kiosks. It was determined that Recreation & Parks has the overall responsibility for park lands and the Public Works Department has the responsibility for the maintenance of park lands.

Mr. McCahill stated that the specifics of the existing kiosks were then discussed at the meeting. One of the kiosks discussed was located behind the old Huckleberry Hill School, which has since been converted to apartments. This kiosk, which is in disrepair, was originally a Boy Scout project dating back twenty five years. It was in Mr. Marston's opinion that, because there are no trails behind the apartments, this kiosk should be removed.

Mr. McCahill stated that the kiosks located at 70 Westland Road and 282 Huckleberry Hill Road are also in disrepair. Further discussion at this meeting determined that these two kiosks were the next to be replaced and could possibly be a project for an interested scout troop.

Mr. McCahill stated that standardizing the kiosks was the next topic of discussion at the meeting. The kiosks located at 75 Tillotson Road and 800 Old Farms Road are going to be used as the standard construction detail for the construction and installation of all future kiosks.

He continued by stating that Mr. Marston is working on a “book of ideas” which will be available as a resource for anyone looking for projects or donations to the Town of Avon. Mr. McCahill stated that Mr. Williams will be encouraging the Public Works Department grounds crew to become more proactive in making note of any kiosks that are in need of maintenance.

Mr. McCahill concluded that once Ferrucci & Walicki LLC completes their mapping project, an easy mechanism to reproduce these maps will be in place and then maps can be placed in the kiosks. He added that he is encouraged that the project for maintaining the kiosks is moving in the right direction.

Mr. Schwartz stated that many people use the playground at Buckingham Road. He continued by stating that the parking lot at the playground could be a choice location for another kiosk.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Planning and Community Development Specialist

Mr. McCahill stated that the general scope of the proposed project for the Avon Center Village Zone would require that the Planning & Zoning Commission first adopt regulations which would allow for future mixed use development. The properties, located to the north and east of Town Hall, were discussed in detail at the Planning & Zoning Commission’s January 13th meeting. He continued by stating the Planning & Zoning Commission has finalized, for the most part, the language that will be adopted to change the Town of Avon’s Zoning Regulations to allow for future mixed use development. The final DRAFT of the proposed regulation changes will be discussed at the March 15, 2011 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting.

Planning & Zoning Commission will also be reviewing the final DRAFT for amendments to the Town of Avon Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations to allow for the integration of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques. Milone & MacBroom Inc, as the selected consultants, have been working on this project for over a year through a \$50,000 grant from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The grant is due to expire on March 31, 2011, at which time “project deliverables” will be due to the DEP. Mr. McCahill indicated that the Town is on track with meeting this deadline. In response to Ms. May’s comment on the implementation of LID techniques for the proposed Avon Center Village Zone project as being “experimental”, Mr. McCahill stated that there has been approximately twenty years of scientific data collected to support the use of LID techniques.

Ms. May expressed her concerns about the unknown shortfalls and the extent to which LID techniques will be implemented for the proposed Avon Center Village Zone project. Mr. McCahill stated that Town staff was presented with volumes of suggestions for the implementation of LID techniques. He continued by stating that the Town Staff is taking

small steps by allowing the flexibility to use LID techniques where appropriate. Town Staff is being very cautious about what will be included as implemental LID techniques. It was noted that the Route 44 road project, Valley Community Baptist Church and West Farms Mall have implemented various types of LID techniques.

Ms. Harrop commented that the implementation of LID techniques (the depressed islands in the center median) on Avon Mountain appeared to be working well.

Ms. May expressed concerns about the long term effects and success of LID.

Mr. McCahill responded to Mr. Samul's question by stating that the goal of the amendments is to enable the use of LID techniques.

Mr. Samul stated, it would appear, that economics, rather than the Planning & Zoning Commission, would dictate what would comprise the proposed Avon Center Village Zone.

Mr. McCahill gave an update on the Wild & Scenic Designation. He continued by stating that, in a January email from Joyce Kennedy Raymes, Study Coordinator for the Lower Farmington River/Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic Study, she indicated that the Study Committee is busy finalizing the Wild & Scenic Study reports including the Management Plan and Study Report. Once the National Park Service review of the reports is complete, they will be published in the Federal Register for a public comment period.

The Study Committee is also developing a 2011 work-plan based on the recommendations from the Wild & Scenic Management Plan that can be accomplished prior to the designation. For example, the Committee would like to continue working on removal of invasive plants in Fisher Meadow, along the Farmington River. Ms. Raymes added that the Chairperson of their Management & Protection Sub Committee received some feedback from Mr. Marston, with input from Mr. McCahill, regarding possible recreation enhancement projects that the Wild & Scenic Committee might be able to support once the designation is in place.

B. Natural Resource Award

Mr. Samul thanked the Commission for attending the presentation of the Natural Resource Award to Jan Titus. He continued by also thanking John McCahill for his work in drafting the award, and Mary Harrop for her exceptional presentation.

VII. NEXT MEETING: May 12, 2011

There being no further business, Mr. Samul adjourned the meeting at 8:27 pm.