

TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK
Conservation Commission

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**PLANNING
COMMISSION
EXHIBIT # 24**

October 26, 2004

FILE COPY

Robert McIntyre, Chairman
Old Saybrook Planning Commission
302 Main Street
Old Saybrook, CT 06475

Subject: "The Preserve" Preliminary Open Space Subdivision & Open Space Plan
Ingham Hill and Bokum Roads (Maps 55, 56 & 61, Lots 6, 3, 15, 17 & 18)
Residence Conservation C District, Aquifer Protection Area
Applicant: River Sound Development LLC, Agent: Robert A. Landino, P.E.

Chairman McIntyre:

The Conservation Commission has comments in four primary areas:

1. Comparisons with the 1994 and 2004 Plans of Conservation & Open Space

The Plans of Conservation & Open Space for this area of town have always called for preserving a greenway area in the shape of a donut for habitat and passive recreation. The southern half of the "donut" was realized with the purchase of what is now known as the Great Cedars Conservation Area and the improvement of the trail system within this land area. The Open Space Plan proposed by "The Preserve", with the open space land to be deeded to the Town of Old Saybrook, goes a long way toward completing the "donut". However, we should examine the plan in detail to see if the "donut" can be closed at the north end. Interestingly, closing the "donut" may be best accomplished by utilizing a piece of the town-owned land that juts into "The Preserve" area from the north. In any case, the 1994 Plan of Conservation called for the development of a Northern Greenway Loop trail system that should remain our goal.

2. Comparisons with the Open Space Subdivision Regulations

The Conservation Commission has examined the Open Space plan and believes that the 542 acres to be set aside as open space meets the requirements of the Open Space Subdivision.

3. Considerations of Yield and Configuration

The Conservation Commission recognizes that there has been a tremendous amount of work that has gone into the selection of number of sites and configuration of this development, and does not wish to duplicate the efforts of the applicant, the land use staff and consultants in the establishment of yield under the regulations. However, we would recommend that the overall development plan be looked at relative to overlays of soil types, slopes, wetlands, watercourses, etc., to assure that this is the very best configuration based on the natural constraints of the land. We would recommend enlisting the help of the in-house GIS person to use the GIS data layers to show these constraints on the land. That information should not only allow an assessment of the best configuration for the land but also allow us to assess the amount of truly "buildable land".

The natural geology of the land runs north-south, while the main infrastructure of the development proposal runs primarily east-west. This results in a requirement for extensive cuts and fills that cause large disturbances of vegetation, wildlife habitats, soil and rock, which in turn result in a serious risk for erosion, sedimentation and airborne particulate pollution. It would be helpful to see a plan showing the areas that will have to be disturbed in this way for the construction of the proposed development.

The east side of the proposed development contains a large portion of the most sensitive wetlands on the property, including a significant part of the headwater streams of the Oyster River. The elimination of the large infrastructure in this area would provide a great environmental plus. This could be accomplished by eliminating the portion of Road A between Road C and Road H, and then connecting Road H through the Village area to Ingham Hill Road. In addition, if the piece of Road A just west of the proposed fire house were routed around the wetland on the north side, these road changes would eliminate all wetland crossings and the accompanying bridge structures.

This set of plan changes would be to the benefit of the greater community – residents, taxpayers, businesses, and the environment. This new configuration would also positively address threats identified in the latest Old Saybrook Plan of Conservation and Open Space by reducing the destruction of habitat, fragmentation, pollution, habitat alteration and the potential for introduction of invasive species.

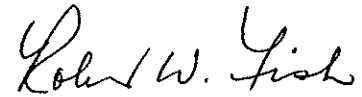
4. Suitability of the Open Space Plan

The Open Space Plan proposed by the applicant does connect well with the Town's present open space as represented by the Great Cedars Conservation Area and the Town Park System. The proposed trail system within the "Preserve" also connects at appropriate locations with the Town's present trail system.

We need to be concerned about the management system that is put in place to allow us to do a good job of stewardship of the proposed new open space and the present open space and park land, which when combined would be over 1,000 acres! We believe it would be appropriate for the applicant to provide start-up or endowment funds for the long term stewardship and maintenance of the open space property.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert W. Fish". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Robert W. Fish, Chairman
Old Saybrook Conservation Commission

Copies to: Michael A. Pace, First Selectman; Christine Nelson, Director of Land Use