

Town of Stonington Conservation Commission  
Minutes of a Regular Meeting held on April 23, 2012  
Police Station Meeting Room, 173 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT

**1. Call to order:** Chairman Stanton Simm called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. In attendance were Stuart Cole, Jim Friedlander, Ben Baldwin, Tim Bell, Sheila Lyons and Walter Grant. Member Bob Dewire and Town Planner Keith Brynes were absent.

MOTION: Move to item 5a, *Discussion with Kate Brown of the Trust for Public Land regarding Coogan Farm Open Space* (Cole, Friedlander). Passed unanimously.

**5. New Business**

**5a. Discussion with Kate Brown of the Trust for Public Land regarding Coogan Farm Open Space.** Kate Brown distributed a handout of her presentation. She, Maggie Jones of the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, and Steven Dodd presented the proposed purchase of the 34-acre Coogan Farm property on Greenmanville Avenue and Clara Drive. Brown said that TPL has an option to purchase the property from the family trust by March 2013 at a cost of \$2.8 Million. Jones said that the property is unique, offers connectivity, critical habitat and contains historic resources. The land abuts the 11 acres of open space that will be granted as part of the subdivision for BROM Builders' 18-acre assisted living development. TPL and the Coogan Farm Committee asked that the Conservation Commission recommend that the property be acquired as open space in a letter that will be part of an open space grant application to the State and recommend that the Town bond about \$1.5 Million of the purchase price. The Town and DPNC would share ownership while the State DEEP would have a conservation easement. The balance of the purchase price would be raised privately after the State grant, expected to be. Les Bray, the listing real estate broker at William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty, and Jonathan Duncklee of the Coogan Farm Committee both spoke in favor of the acquisition. Conservation Commission members discussed the status of the abutting Morgan Farm and other Denison Society property as undedicated open space. Past attempts at bonding for open space acquisition in town were discussed, Elm Ridge Golf Course in the 1990s and the general bond study by TPL in 2006. Chairman Simm said that the price per acre seemed very high and that an acquisition in Mystic would not be well received in other sections of town. He said that the Conservation Commission was currently negotiating with a property owner to preserve more land at a lower cost. Steven Cobb asked if the Conservation Commission could score the property using the Open Space Plan's parcel rating sheet.

Members decided to walk the property on April 25<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm and then have a special meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup> instead of the regular May meeting. The property will be rated using the form at the May meeting. Kate Brown and members of the Coogan Farm Committee departed. Baldwin said that he had not participated in the meeting and had planned to recuse himself, but the meeting had gotten underway before he had had the chance.

MOTION: Move to item 4 (Grant, Bell). Passed unanimously.

**4. Old Business**

**4a. Mystic River Dam Committee.** No report.

**4b. Discussion of Stonington's 200 Greatest Roadside Trees.** Baldwin reported that the 2012-2013 Proposed Budget states that the DPW will be inventorying and assessing assets within the town rights-of-way, including trees and that many trees will be cut at the south end of the Pawcatuck dike. The tree trimming (pruning) budget will be increased while the Tree Mgt Plan/Tree Planting line item will be reduced from \$5,000 to \$0.

**4c. Discussion of Progress on Plan of Conservation and Development's Open Space Plan.** No report.

**4d. Discussion of Open Space and Conservation Easement Transfers for Ongoing and Past Subdivisions.** Baldwin wondered the status of the Copsps Brook Property, LLC resubdivision on New London Turnpike. The open space was declared upon subdivision in 2006, but does not appear to have been transferred to be held by another entity. Chairman Simm asked Baldwin to ask Town Planer Keith Brynes the status of the application and the validity of the open space dedication.

**4e. Any Other Old Business.** None.

**2. Review of Town Developments and Proposals:**

**2a. Any pending applications and new preliminary proposals.** None.

**3. Open Space Parcels**

**3a. Discussion of parcels for preservation.**

Baldwin asked if the new addition to Barn Island WMA, 6-acre 207 Palmer Neck Road, will be cleaned up. The gate is open and the house is being trashed and debris spread. The Wequetequock Cove Preserve, a/k/a Crowley II, is open only to birds from April until fall. Baldwin mentioned the recent announcement by Mystic Seaport Museum of construction of a new "winter museum" building, replacing the north boat shed and part of the library near the north gate. Baldwin said that a friend expressed concern to him regarding the playing fields proposal option that called for construction of a new field in Spellman Park between the two pavilions. The ground is extremely rough and the friend was concerned that the referendum would produce seed money to allow fill from the road projects to be placed there in the park. Rick Newton of Avalonia Land Conservancy's town committee said that the Hewitt Road parcels received from Mystic Seaport Museum have not been dedicated as open space. Baldwin suggested visiting the Watsky property.

**5. New Business**

**5b. Other New Business.** The passing of Director of Planning Bill Haase was noted with remembrances.

**5c. Correspondence.** A letter from Nancy D'Estang on development issues in town with photographs, Avalonia Land Conservancy's spring 2012 *Avalonia Trails*, CACIWC's spring 2012 issue of *The Habitat*.

**6. Review of March 26, 2012 draft minutes**

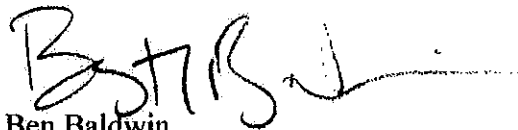
MOTION: That the minutes be accepted as distributed (Cole, Bell). Passed unanimously.

**7. Executive Session regarding Open Space Acquisition Issues**

MOTION: That the Commission enter Executive Session to discuss open space acquisition issues (Baldwin, Bell). Passed unanimously. Remaining members of the public departed. Multiple properties of multiple owners were discussed. MOTION: To exit from Executive session (Grant, Bell).

**8. Adjournment.** Cole made a motion to adjourn at 10:30 pm.

Minutes submitted by



Ben Baldwin  
Secretary, Town of Stonington Conservation Commission

Approved at a special meeting of the Commission on 5/14/2012.