

Town of Stonington Conservation Commission
Minutes of a Regular Meeting held on November 26, 2012
Police Station Community Meeting Room, 173 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT

1. Call to order: Called to order by Vice Chairman Stuart Cole at 7:10 p.m. Commission members also in attendance were Tim Bell, Sheila Lyons, Jim Friedlander and Walter Grant. Ben Baldwin arrived at 7:13 and Chairman Stanton Simm arrived at 7:17. Member Bob Dewire was absent. Town Planner Keith Brynes and members of the public were present.

2. Review of Town Developments and Proposals

2a. PZ1230SD & GPP Rowley, LLC (Allied Development) – Subdivision and Groundwater Protection Permit applications for an 11-lot Open Space Development Subdivision with a 742± cul-de-sac. Property located at 615 North Stonington Rd., Stonington. Assessor's Map 115 Block 1 Lot 1. Zone GBR-130.

Patrick Lafayette, project manager, and Patrick Gallagher of Allied Development, presented a conventional subdivision plan that showed that they could legitimately support 11 lots. The 78.8-acre property is 22.3% wetlands. The difficulty they have found is that they cannot set aside open space with more than 22.3% wetlands and therefore they had to increase the size of one or more building lots to equalize. The regulation 'problem' was noted and will be forwarded a recommendation of change for the 2014 POCD. The house lots will total 27 acres of the 78.8 acres. Open space would total 53.3 acres which would abut Avalonia's Perry Preserve. MOTION: In favor of the open space set aside (Simm, Bell). Passed unanimously.

Simm assumed chairmanship of the meeting.

2b. PZ1228RA Town of Stonington PZC – Regulation Amendment to provide conformance with CT Public Act 12-101, effective 10/1/12. The Act modifies the State's jurisdiction over coastal resources, re-establishing a new Coastal Jurisdiction Line (elevation 2' (NAVD 88)). The amendment matches Town ZRs to the State law, limiting potential confusion when determining countable land for calculating bulk requirements. Town Planner Brynes described the State Law and how the regulation amendment will be designed to avoid confusion. It was noted that the regulation presently counts land above the 3-foot line while the State Law uses 2 feet, but there was discussion about how those two elevations are calculated. MOTION: That the Commission recommends adjusting the regulations to conform to the State Law (Lyons, Friedlander). Passed unanimously.

2c. Any pending applications and new preliminary proposals. None.

MOTION: Move to item 5a (Cole, Bell). Passed unanimously.

5a. New Business - Discussion of possible Open Space Acquisition Funding for preservation of Coogan Farm open space. John Swenarton and Steven Dodd of the Campaign to Save Coogan Farm spoke about the fundraising effort underway to purchase the 34-acre property by March 2013. \$1.6 Million of \$2.8 Million purchase price has been raised and they are expecting hear about \$300,000 to \$600,000 from the State by the end of the year. They reported that the Trust for Public Land is working with the Denison Society to work at dedicating the adjacent Morgan Farm as open space, but they were unsure whether the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center portion of Denison Society land was also part of the discussion. The property will become a well-used and accessible park with trails and a bike trail connecting the Aquarium with the Seaport Museum. They said that they are confident that they will raise the funds, that many townspeople are for the acquisition and they are asking that the Town to contribute \$150,000 or about \$4,400 per acre toward the effort. It was noted that the Town's open space acquisition fund has a balance of ±\$300,000 and is funded by fee in lieu of open space lien payments as subdivided lots are sold. Steven Dodd said that Coogan Farm donors are a spider web of open space supporters through Town and that the silence on the preservation of open space is deafening in Town. John Swenarton noted that they were trying to tie into the public interest in the acquisition in making their request or offer of a public-private partnership in the acquisition. It was noted that the Town has contributed in the past, such as a \$10,000 contribution toward the \$495,000 purchase of Paffard Woods by Avalonia in 2003. The alternative to acquisition was noted: development.

Commission members noted that the Coogan Farm was the remnant of a large farm that made up a large part of the Golden Triangle and that it is not good farmland. It was also noted that the Commission must respond to the environment merits of the acquisition instead of the economic benefits. Chairman Simm noted that the Stonington Land Trust, of which he is a director, signed a contract to purchase about 160 acres of land in Pawcatuck, including ½ mile of waterfront, at under \$10,000 per acre. Stuart Cole noted that the historic 64-acre Stone Acres estate on North Main Street is being offered at \$3.1 Million (\$48,438 per acre) and includes much prime farmland. Swenarton and Dodd departed, asking that the Commission consider their request.

MOTION: Move to item 3a (Bell, Friedlander). Passed unanimously.

3. Old Business

3a. Mystic River Dam Committee – It was suggested that a community meeting of abutters be held re: the Hyde Pond dam with Steve Gephard, Biologist at the CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection, Inland Fisheries Division.

3b. Discussion of Stonington's 200 Greatest Roadside Trees – Many trees and limbs reported down along roads and within town-managed open space by Superstorm Sandy. Rick Newton noted *The Sun's* article on a plan to identify Notable Trees in North Stonington.

3c. Discussion of Progress on Plan of Conservation and Development's Open Space Plan – Walter Grant asked if the Open Space Plan should be reviewed as part of the 2014 POCD although it was finalized in 2007. Keith Brynes said that it could be. Grant asked if the Conservation Commission could form a committee to review and update the Open Space Plan.

3d. Discussion of Open Space and Conservation Easement Transfers for Ongoing and Past Subdivisions – Chairman Simm asked Ben Baldwin to research whether land abutting 17 Stony Brook Road is dedicated open space. Rick Newton said that the Mystic Hill subdivision's open space owned by Mr. O'Keefe hasn't transferred.

3e. Discussion of 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development – The public input meeting will be held on 12/3/2012 at the High School Commons. Grant distributed a draft of the online questionnaire for residents. Grant submitted our POCD requests. Sheila Lyons questioned whether funds set aside for past Capital Improvement Program (CIP or "kip") projects had been spent. MOTION: Lyons to investigate (Cole, Bell). Passed unanimously. Carlene Donnarummo suggested she speak with Maryanna Stevens, the Director of Finance. Lyons read a letter to Bill Haase dated 12/6/2010 with a list of POCD priorities and one dated 8/4/2008 from Bill Abt of the POCDIC to the Board of Selectmen re: progress toward implementing the POCD. She asked that Grant use them for the POCD update. Baldwin will distribute copies via email.

3f. Discussion of a "Right to Farm" regulation – Not discussed.

3g. Discussion of municipal care of trees – Rick Newton said he attended a lecture by Glenn Dryer at StoneRidge.

3h. Any Other Old Business –23 Bittersweet Way – Baldwin said that he had emailed the first selectman on the issue of public access brought before the Commission by Pail Lesniewski in October, but that he had not received a reply. Cole suggested meeting with him in person.

4. Open Space Parcels

4a. Discussion of parcels for preservation. Cherenzia has yet to transfer open space to the Stonington Land Trust. The SLT is waiting on the deed for 27 acres and has voted to accept it.

The SLT has taken an option on 170 acres of the Davis Farm, signed today. A 3.5-acre parcel will be transferred by Marty Gilbert to SLT, part of the ceremonial land near the waterfront. 120 acres are located adjacent to Barn Island WMA.

Friedlander departed at 10:15 pm.

5. New Business

5a. The 2013 Schedule was set for 4th Monday except for May 20th. No meeting in December, like 2012.

6. Review of Minutes

MOTION : Approve the minutes for October 22, 2012 as distributed (Bell, Lyons). Passed unanimously.

7. Adjournment - Motion to adjourn (Bell). Approved at 10:20 p.m.

Minutes submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Baldwin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ben Baldwin

Secretary, Town of Stonington Conservation Commission