

Town of Stonington Conservation Commission
Minutes of a Regular Meeting held on January 28, 2013
Police Station Community Meeting Room, 173 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT

1. Call to order: Called to order by Chairman Stanton Simm at 7:05 p.m. Commission members also in attendance were Tim Bell, Stuart Cole, Ben Baldwin, Jim Friedlander and Walter Grant. Members Sheila Lyons, Bob Dewire and Town Planner Keith Brynes were absent. Members of the public were present.

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

3. Review of Town Developments and Proposals

3a. PZ1231SD & GPP Robert & Margaret Gilbert - Subdivision and Groundwater Protection Permit applications for a 2-lot subdivision. Property located at 704 Al Harvey Rd., Stonington. Assessor's Map 114 Block 1 Lot 2. Zone RR-80. Attorney Ted Ladwig presented the application for a subdivision to 2 lots of 2.60 and 2.19 acres. The owners were present. The applicant requested a fee in lieu of open space. The property is surrounded by the Wychwood Farm and there is no dedicated open space nearby. MOTION: The Commission is in favor of a fee in lieu of open space (Cole, Friedlander). Passed unanimously.

MOTION: Move to item 2 and enter Executive Session (Cole, Bell). Passed unanimously.

2. Executive Session regarding possible purchase of land for conservation purposes

Members of the public departed and the Commission entered executive session. A property that has been offered to the town as open space was reviewed. The Commission exited from executive session at 8:10 pm. No votes were taken.

3b. Any pending applications and new preliminary proposals. None. Carlene Donnarummo said that she was sorry to have missed the Gilbert application that was to have been reviewed after the Executive Session, but instead was reviewed out of the agenda's order.

4. Old Business

4a. Mystic River Dam Committee - No report.

4b. Discussion of Stonington's 200 Greatest Roadside Trees - Notable trees have recently been cut on Morgan Street and North Main Street.

4c. Discussion of Progress on Plan of Conservation and Development's Open Space Plan - A committee to review and update the 2007 Open Space Plan was formed. Individuals offering to help out are Jim Friedlander, Walter Grant, Ben Baldwin and Jennifer Herbst.

4d. Discussion of Open Space and Conservation Easement Transfers for Ongoing and Past Subdivisions - No new or corrected transfers.

4e. Discussion of 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development and questionnaire - Walter Grant said that the committee is holding 2 meetings per month and that the 4/1/2013 meeting at 7 pm will focus on open space for approximately 30 minutes; Conservation Commission members are invited to attend. The 4/15/2013 meeting will apparently review suggestions made on 4/1/2013.

4f. Discussion of a "Right to Farm" regulation - No draft was received. It was noted that there are many 'farms' and like uses on nonconforming parcels. Two were noted: The Miner Sawmill and "Wild Goose Ranch" on North Anguilla Road that was featured in *The Stonington Times* on 12/6/2012.

4g. Discussion of municipal care of trees - Chairman Simm said that DPW director Joe Bragaw is looking to get some funding for tree care instead of just tree removal.

4h. Discussion of public access restrictions at Town-owned open space located at 23 Bittersweet Way, Assessor's Map 124, Block 2, Lot 15E - Ben Baldwin reported that he had spoken with First Selectman Ed Haberek about the situation and that the First Selectman will speak with the property owner that this parcel's access strip abuts.

4i. Any Other Old Business - Ben Baldwin said that Sheila Lyons was studying funding of the Capital Improvement Program over the past few years.

5. Open Space Parcels

5a. Discussion of parcels for preservation - A discussion was held with Keith Main on the possible acquisition of a riverfront portion of his property located at 321 Liberty Street. Various options were discussed. Chairman Simm will discuss access from the abutting commuter parking lot with CT DOT.

The four parcels owned by Abed totaling about 48 acres and containing Stony Brook were discussed.

Tim Bell said that an investigatory walk had been offered of the 33.08-acre 111-113 Montauk Avenue parcel of Cottrell and Lindberg Gourd.

Chairman Simm said that Byron Brown, Chief Sachem of the Wiquapaug Eastern Pequot Indian Tribe, wishes to establish a land trust in Pawcatuck.

5b. Discussion of possible Open Space Acquisition Funding for preservation of Coogan Farm open space. Jennifer Herbst, a member of the Conservation Commission 2000-2009, spoke about the Coogan Farm and asked that the Commission reconsider recommending that the town contribute toward its preservation as open space from the land acquisition fund. She said that in 2006 Kathy Marshall of the Coogan family contacted the Conservation Commission and we put her in touch with the Trust for Public Land and Attorney Gahagan. She said that the sale price is below the fair market price, that this acquisition will prevent sprawl and reduce automobile use. She said that about \$2 million has been raised or pledged plus a State grant of \$500,000 was made thanks to a recommendation by the Conservation Commission. The purchase price is \$2.8 million.

John Swenarton, a member of the Coogan Farm Committee and also a former Conservation Commission member, asked the members to reconsider recommending a contribution from the town. He said that it is popular effort with about 200 donors and 60 volunteers.

Stuart Cole said that the Conservation Commission's letter to the Board of Selectmen gave our reservations for the acquisition while the letter to the State did not include those reservations. He also said that plans seemed vague as the property is improved with a large house and modern barn, both which will apparently be retained. Each member of the Commission spoke and generally expressed the opinion that the town should not contribute toward the acquisition because the land is poor farmland and the purchase price is not a bargain. Ben Baldwin said that he was recusing himself from the deliberations, but that the Nature Center could be supported for the educational conservation project they are undertaking, putting the question of the land acquisition aside.

6. New Business

6a. Discussion of draft updates to the Town's Subdivision Regulations. – Not discussed

6b. Correspondence –

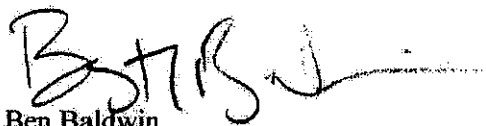
- Letter from Jennifer Herbst dated 12/5/2012 re: Coogan Farm
- November/December *Connecticut Wildlife* magazine from CTDEEP
- Winter 2012-2013 *Avalonia Trails* newsletter of ALC
- Fall 2012 *The Habitat* newsletter of CACIWC
- Summer 2012 *Watershed* newsletter of WPWA
- CT Bar Assn brochure for *CT land use law for municipal land use agencies, boards and commissions* to be held in Middletown on 3/16/2013 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm for \$45.
- FEMA letter on floodplain management to Chair

7. Review of minutes

The minutes of 11/26/2012 were approved as distributed (Friedlander, Bell). Passed unanimously.

8. Adjournment – Motion to adjourn (Bell). Approved at 10:30 pm.

Minutes submitted by



Ben Baldwin
Secretary, Town of Stonington Conservation Commission

Approved at a regular meeting on 3/25/2013.