

Town of Stonington Conservation Commission  
Minutes of a Regular Meeting held on May 20, 2013  
Police Station Community Meeting Room, 173 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT

**1. Call to order:** Called to order by Vice Chairman Stuart Cole at 7:12 p.m. Commission members also in attendance were Tim Bell, Ben Baldwin, Jim Friedlander and Walter Grant. Chairman Stanton Simm arrived at 7:30 p.m. Members Sheila Lyons, Bob Dewire and Town Planner Keith Brynes were absent. Members of the public were present.

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

**2a. PZ1302RA Town of Stonington PZC (FEMA) – Proposed revisions to Flood Hazard Regulations to conform to new FEMA Flood Hazard Coastal Maps which will be effective August 5, 2013.** Town Planner Brynes had distributed a staff report including the draft language of the regulation amendment to the Commission by email. It was reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission won't be accepting the optional requirements of the language and that the PZC hearing would be continued tomorrow night. No comment.

**2b. PZ1305RA Town of Stonington (PZC) – Regulation Amendment to give the Zoning Board of Appeals the authority to review the adequacy of variance applications that come before them, thus allowing the ZBA to waive the requirement for an A-2 survey rather than the Planning & Zoning Commission.** Town Planner Brynes had distributed the draft language of the regulation amendment to the Commission by email. Cole suggested this item be tabled as Chairman Simm wants to comment on it.

**2c. PZ1307RA Peg Moran – Regulation Amendment to permit the keeping of hens as an accessory to residential uses in all zoning districts.** The application was not received by the Commission. It was reportedly submitted on May 17, 2013 and wasn't ready for distribution to the Commission.

**2d. Any pending applications and new preliminary proposals - None**

**3. Old Business**

Items **3d. Discussion of 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development** and **3e. Discussion of Updates to 2007 Open Space Plan** were discussed until the arrival of Chairman Simm who took over the meeting. MOTION: Move to item **2b** (Friedlander, Bell). Passed unanimously.

**2b. PZ1305RA Town of Stonington (PZC) – Discussion** was held. MOTION: The Conservation Commission concurs with the proposal (Friedlander, Bell). Passed unanimously.

**3. Old Business**

**3a. Mystic River Dam Committee** – Tim Bell has observed the fish ladder installed in Wequetequock Brook and said the property owners have a bridge over the sluiceway. Baldwin asked about the growth of algae in upper Wequetequock Cove. There was speculation that the removal of the Rutan Dam could have allowed additional nutrients to flow downstream, but Rick Newton said that the condition is widespread in Barn Island.

**3b. Discussion of Stonington's 200 Greatest Roadside Trees** – Baldwin suggested asking for public assistance with the project through a form on the Commission's website. It was noted that urban forestry grants were recently announced for projects including tree inventories and planting replacements to storm-damaged trees. Baldwin suggested we investigate the source in order to apply next time. Simm said they were America the Beautiful grants from the US Forest Service administered by CT DEEP. The Toll Brothers open space still has not transferred. Simm said that engineers erred in that there was no plan for an outlet from the retention basin located in the open space.

**3c. Discussion of Open Space and Conservation Easement Transfers for Ongoing and Past Subdivisions** – The Allied Development's open space development subdivision required a conservation easement. Avalonia did not wish to hold the easement although they will hold the abutting open space in fee so it was accepted by the Board of Selectmen for the town. Simm and Cole reviewed the language and felt it was quite strong. Rick Newton said the ALC did not take the easement on Lot 6 of Sunrise Estates due to the \$7,000-\$8,000 cost of a baseline study and establishment of a legal defense fund.

**3d. Discussion of 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development** – Walter Grant said the focus is currently on village centers and the next meeting is on June 3rd.

**3e. Discussion of Updates to 2007 Open Space Plan** – A draft of the Parcel Rating Sheet was reviewed and changes were suggested. Ben Baldwin will distribute those.

**3f. Discussion of municipal care of trees** – Discussion was on the lack of budgeted funds.

**3g. Discussion of public access restrictions at Town-owned open space located at 23 Bittersweet Way, Assessor's Map 124, Block 2, Lot 15E** – Baldwin said that First Selectman Haberek had offered to place a sign at the open space's access point. Baldwin thought that a small boundary marker disk or diamond saying "Town Open Space" would be appropriate and was awaiting word from the town planner as to whether the town has something like it.

**3h. Discussion of draft updates to the Town's Subdivision Regulations** – Waiting for Town Planner at next meeting.

**3i. Any Other Old Business** – None.

#### **4. Open Space Parcels**

**4a. Discussion of parcels for preservation** – 1) Tim Bell said that Erica Lindberg Gourd is still interested in preserving a portion of the 32± acres on Montauk Avenue that is the site of the former Stone Ridge Casino and a trotting track. Baldwin thought it might have access from Cove Road via a common driveway which abuts the west rear of the property. 2) Simm said that he had met the daughter of Mr. Maguire, the owner of the open farmland at Anguilla Plains (Pequot Trail & North Anguilla Road), and was attempting to contact him. He reportedly wishes to preserve the farmland.

**4b. Discussion of 10 acre Town owned open space parcel** – Assessor's Map 14, Block 2, Lot 9A – S. Broad St., Pawcatuck, behind Post Office. The Commission has asked the Selectman to transfer this mostly wet parcel with a 10-foot wide access strip to the Stonington Land Trust, but the process to do so is long and drawn out. The property is adjacent to undeveloped Moss Park and transferred to the town from Mr. Vincent Faulise after he sold the front 2 acres for use as the Post Office. The Affordable Housing Commission has reportedly received a proposal for senior housing in this area, perhaps in Moss Park.

#### **5. New Business**

**5a. Discussion of transfer of town owned "open space" properties to private preservation organizations.** Chairman Simm said that the 9.7-acre open space parcel from Phase I of Cherenzia's Crescent Club development will be transferred from the town to SLT to be incorporated into SLT's existing Meadow Woods Preserve, but it is a long process.

Kate Robinson asked about the transfer of town-held and developer-held open space to the SLT as this was the reason a municipal land trust was proposed by the 2004 POCD. She said she had not received a response to her letter of October 2012 on this topic. She said that the land needs to be posted, inspected annually and monitored. Simm and Cole stated that they believed that a municipal land trust was not the way to go, as seen by the experience of Westerly's municipal land trust which was pressured to return open space near the sewage treatment plant for use as a parking lot. They said that no independent land trust would want to hold and manage the small open space set asides. The Conservation Commission continues to compile its list of open spaces held in fee and conservation easements. The Planning Office is responsible for monitoring public access.

**5b. Discussion of current fiscal year commission budget** – Chairman Simm asked that the allocation made at the last meeting for Naturescapes be increased to \$1,900, the amount charged over the past few years. It was noted that the original Naturescapes, the bus expense, CACIWCC, Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, Avalonia Land Conservancy and Stonington Land Trust allocations were made at the March 25, 2013 meeting. MOTION: Increase from \$1,700 to \$1,900 (Friedlander, Bell). Passed unanimously. The remaining funds from fiscal year 2012-2013 were allocated as follows:

\$82	Walter Grant travel to meeting & registration
\$100	Connecticut Land Conservation Council
\$100	The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut Chapter
\$100	Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
<u>          </u>	
\$382	Total

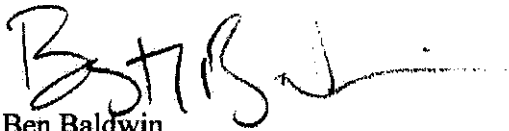
MOTION: To allocate the funds as presented (Grant, Bell). Passed unanimously. It was noted that the \$43 in remaining funds could be used to purchase a tree ring to keep grass from growing around the Peter S. Thacher memorial sweetgum tree. The tree is located to the South of the Town Hall parking lot and has been damaged by mowing.

**6. Review of minutes**

The minutes of 3/25/2013 were approved as distributed (Cole, Friedlander). Passed unanimously.

**7. Adjournment** – Motion to adjourn (Cole). Approved at 9:45 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**

Approved on July 22, 2013