

Town of Stonington Conservation Commission
Minutes of a Regular Meeting held on August 26, 2013
Police Station Community Meeting Room, 173 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT

1. Call to order: Called to order by Chairman Stanton Simm at 7:14 p.m. Commission members also in attendance were Walter Grant, Jim Friedlander, Tim Bell, Sheila Lyons and Ben Baldwin. Stuart Cole arrived at 7:26 p.m. Member Bob Dewire and Town Planner Keith Brynes were absent. Members of the public were present.

MOTION: Move to item 6b under new business to hear Sheila Lyons' proposal (Bell, Grant). Passed unanimously.

2. Review of Town Developments and Proposals

MOTION: To hear 2b before 2a (Tim Bell, Jim Friedlander). Passed unanimously

2b. PZ1310RA Sea Research Foundation, Inc. & Waterstone Retail, Inc. – Zoning Regulation Text Amendment to permit retail sales uses within the M-1 Zoning District under certain conditions by Special Permit. Said sales and associated displays must be situated entirely within a building no greater than 15,000 sq. ft. in gross floor area and be located no more than one (1) mile from an interstate highway interchange. Attorney Bill Sweeney of Tobin Carberry, representing the applicant, described the regulation amendment which had previously been distributed by Town Planner Brynes via email. West Marine wishes to relocate its store from Clara Drive to parcel 150-1-28A on Maritime Drive. He said that the PZC didn't want a zone change in their preliminary meeting so therefore a regulation amendment was drafted. Development is expected to include clearing the land along Coogan Boulevard so that the store is visible, but access will continue to be off Maritime Drive. It was noted that this is Lot 1 of the subdivision and that Sea Research also owns Lots 2 and 3, but that these lots are encumbered by easements. Lot 2 on the west side of Maritime Drive contains a large pond at its north end that is subject to a conservation easement held by the town. The Aquarium plans to construct replacement excess parking on that lot. Lot 3 is a small lot to the south of Lot 1 that is partially encumbered by an easement to Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC). Peter Harvey of HT Ashforth representing Michael McQuade, West Marine's current landlord, said that there is now sufficient space for West Marine to expand into at Clara Drive because the recent regional hospital consolidation has lead to vacancies. There was discussion regarding the trailhead and parking for the "stone bridges" trail that extends south from the property through ALC's Pequotsepos Brook Preserve. The trail also passes through Lot 3 which was suggested as a replacement, but the preservation of the current trailhead or a nearby location on Lot 1 was hoped for. Ben Baldwin noted that Lot 1 also has a horseshoes court in a pine grove at the trailhead. Rich Newton noted that a change in the trailhead would require a new connection with the spur trail to StoneRidge. Stuart Cole made a motion in favor of the text amendment, but Sheila Lyons asked that it be tabled. Peter Harvey asked that it be tabled as adjacent Tourist Commercial owners are unaware of the application. Town Planner Brynes said that the PZC will hear this application prior to the CC's next meeting.

MOTION: We are in favor of the text amendment and we ask that the Special Use Permit application for the relocation of the trailhead and its design come to the Conservation Commission for comment. We ask that the wetlands be preserved by easement or in fee and the trailhead be continued on the lot, close to the existing location (Stuart Cole, Tim Bell). All in favor except that Sheila Lyons abstained.

2a. PZ1307RA Peg Moran - Regulation Amendment to permit the keeping of hens as an accessory to residential uses in all zoning districts. The "Hens" staff report was previously distributed by Town Planner Brynes for review by email. Peg Moran of CLUC*K (Chicken Lovers Urge Change) spoke on the regulation amendment. She said their PZC hearing will continue on August 6th. Changes to the text are expected, based on the July 17th hearing. **MOTION:** We support the proposal with the expected changes as being reasonable and conservative (Tim Bell, Jim Friedlander). All in favor except that Walter Grant voted against.

2c. PZ0360SD, SUP & GPP Meehan Group, LLC – Request approval for modification of drainage design for previously approved Clairemont subdivision, now Old Mystic Estates (Toll Brothers). Property located at Whitehall Ave., Jerry Browne Rd., & Pequot Trail, Old Mystic. Zones RA-40 & RR-80. A

memo from Town Planner Keith Brynes to the PZC dated 7/12/2013 was previously distributed by email. Attorney Tom Collier of O'Brien Stuart Eppinger & Collier, LLC representing Toll Brothers described the modification necessary after the town engineer discovered that the project had insufficient drainage and flooding occurred on the property and its abutters. He said the only option is to reduce the number of homes by one and construct more detention basins on site. The open space has not yet been set aside although it may be accepted by Stonington Land Trust (SLT). Simm said that holders of open space generally do not wish the open space to contain structures needing access and maintenance. ALC reportedly decided against acceptance of the open space for this reason. The open space area currently contains one or more constructed detention basins and a pumping station, but they and the additional basins are proposed to be "cut out" of the open space area. It was noted that a trail exists or is proposed for this section of the open space area and it will need to be rerouted. MOTION: The Conservation Commission is in favor of the modification of the drainage design and is in favor of the detention basins and pumping station being excluded from the open space to be conveyed (Stuart Cole, Jim Friedlander). Passed unanimously. It was noted that the conveyance should occur as soon as practical, hopefully before October 1 and the new tax year.

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

3. Old Business

Town Planner Keith departed at 9:24 pm.

3a. Mystic River Dam Committee – Tim Bell said that the Taylors had invited us to see the work done at the fish ladder in Wequetequock Brook.

3b. Discussion of Stonington's 200 Greatest Roadside Trees – Not discussed/no report.

3c. Discussion of Open Space and Conservation Easement Transfers for Ongoing and Past Subdivisions – Not discussed/no report.

3d. Discussion of 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development – Walter Grant said he will be writing drafts of the new conservation, open space and agriculture sections.

3e. Discussion of Updates to 2007 Open Space Plan – It was noted that the 2004 POCD had a somewhat ambiguous Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) map, particularly how it depicted greenways and dedicated open spaces. Walter Grant will bring this up with the writer of the 2014 FLUP.

3f. Discussion of municipal care of trees – Not discussed/no report.

3g. 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 said he inspected the frontage in July and noticed that it contained a drainage structure and hosted a boat trailer, but had not confirmed that the abutting property owner had been consulted. He thought that the tree placement will make it difficult to put up a sign and that general posting should await winter months. Stanton Simm said that he has the "Stonington Conservation Area" plastic markers with the Conservation Commission's logo. Baldwin will confirm with the First Selectman, obtain a copy of the filed survey, and then post a marker at the frontage at First Selectman Haberek had offered to place a sign at the open space's access point.

3h. Discussion of draft updates to the Town's Subdivision Regulations – Not discussed/no report.

3i. Any Other Old Business – None.

3j. Discussion of transfer of town owned "open space" properties to private preservation organizations. – Not discussed/no report.

4. Open Space Parcels

4a. Discussion of parcels for preservation – Tim Bell said that Erica Lindberg Gourd wants to preserve a portion of the 33.2± acres on Montauk Avenue and that we should walk it in the fall. It abuts ALC's Knox Family Farm.

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. Baldwin said that he had researched Moss Park open space transfer and the abutting town land behind the Pawcatuck Post Office. The later was a gift from Vincent Faulise and the PZC intended it to be open space.

5. New Business

5a. Discussion of preparation of the Conservation Commission's Annual Report per CT General Statutes.

The town planner requested a copy of an old town calendar for an example of such reports immediately before departing.

5b. Installing signs on Town open space properties. Discussed under 3g.

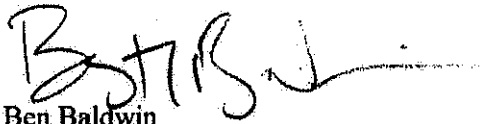
5c. Correspondence. Reports were received from field trip attendees at West Vines Street School.

6. Review of minutes

The minutes of 5/20/2013 were reviewed and approved with the clarification that expenses were approved at the 3/25/2013 meeting and then modified on 5/20/2013 (Tim Bell, Stuart Cole). Passed unanimously.

7. Adjournment – Motion to adjourn (Bell). Approved at 10:07 p.m.

Minutes submitted by



Ben Baldwin
Secretary, Town of Stonington Conservation Commission

Approved at a regular meeting on 9/23/2013