

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
PLANNING DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE ROOM
JANUARY 15, 2018**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Pat Clancy (Chair), Jon Mercier, Frank Belknap, Laura Edwards, Helen Robbins, Bonnie Potocki

ALSO PRESENT: David Laiuppa, Environmental Planner/Wetlands Agent
Malcolm Barlow, Manchester Land Conservation Trust - President

Mr. Clancy convened the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Belknap moved to approve the December 18, 2018 meeting minutes. Mrs. Robbins seconded the motion and all members voted in favor of approval.

Presentations

Mr. Barlow presented a draft application for the acquisition of the Lombardo Farm with assistance from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. The Lombardo Farm property has frontage on Bush Hill Road and Hillstown Road and is directly adjacent to other properties owned by the Manchester Land Conservation Trust.

Upon conclusion of Mr. Barlow's presentation, Mr. Mercier moved to support the proposed acquisition of the Lombardo Farm located at 60 Bush Hill Road and 871 Hillstown Road, Manchester, CT 06040 by the Manchester Land Conservation Trust. The proposed acquisition is consistent with the goals of the *Manchester 2020: 2012 Plan of Conservation and Development* to "Preserve natural resources such as forests, watersheds, habitats and adjacent land" and to "Preserve and promote agriculture as a desired land use." Mr. Belknap seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Application Presentations

There were no application presentations.

Wetlands Permit Status

There were no reports regarding wetland permits.

Communications

- Mr. Laiuppa discussed recent communications that he had with the manager of Town Fair Tire at 328 Middle Turnpike West. He explained that Mr. Belknap alerted the Planning Department of tires that had been discarded into a regulated resource adjacent to Town

Fair Tire. Mr. Laiuppa instructed the store manager to remove the tires. The manager agreed to remove all car tires but did not want to be held responsible for the truck tires because he said that they did not come from their operation. Mr. Laiuppa confirmed that the car tires had been removed from the watercourse.

- Ms. Potocki said that she had communicated with a group of hikers called the Trail Dames. The group had asked who they should talk to in order to have the trails at Case Mountain re-blazed. They had concerns that the blazing was too faded to easily follow the trails.
 - Mr. Clancy said that different trails are under the responsibility of different groups and that he would be happy to be the point of contact so that the message of the Trail Dames could be conveyed to the proper party.

Reports

- Hockanum River Linear Park Committee (HRLPC)
 - Mr. Mercier reported that there is a verbal agreement with the Damato Apartments for trail access near New State Road.
 - Mr. Mercier reported that he and Mr. Laiuppa have a meeting planned for January 16 with the Manchester Town Attorney, Tim O'neil, to discuss access rights to the trail at various locations in town.
- Case Mountain Recreation Area
 - Mr. Clancy discussed a field meeting that he and Mr. Laiuppa had with Rob Topliff - Manchester Parks and Recreation Facilities Manager, to discuss the foundation of the bath house. Mr. Topliff agreed to remove, fill, and grade the portion of the foundation where there are currently cinder blocks on the ground. All parties agreed that the "slab" portion of the foundation should remain and might make a good base for a future picnic table. Mr. Topliff could not commit to a firm date for this work due to weather but thought that it should be done within the next couple of months.
- Manchester Land Conservation Trust (MLCT)
 - Nothing to report.
- Rail Trails and Greenways
 - Mr. Laiuppa discussed the efforts that are currently underway by the Town to clear the Cheney Trail between Center Street and Forest Street. He said that the area that is being cleared is very wide and still has a good amount of railroad infrastructure in place.
 - The Commission members showed great interest in the opportunity for something special to be done with this area.

- Mr. Clancy & Mr. Belknap suggested that the Historical Society should be involved with future planning in the area – due to the historical significance of the rail in the area.
 - Ms. Potocki brought up the idea of making trail maps more available to the general public by having them posted at various, key locations throughout town.
 - Commission members suggested locations that were not confined to “Town Hall hours”, such as the YMCA and the library.
 - Mrs. Robbins asked if there could be an online version of the former “Trail Mix” set of maps.
 - Ms. Potocki suggested that Chris Silver (Director - Office for Neighborhoods and Families) should be invited to a future Conservation Commission meeting.
- Garden Club
 - Nothing to report.
- Manchester Matters Bulletin
 - Nothing to report.
- Land Acquisition Committee
 - Mr. Clancy reported that there will be a Land Acquisition meeting later in the month.

Old Business

- Mr. Laiuppa let the Commission know that the comments from the Commission, regarding updates to the trail maps at Case Mountain, have been forwarded to the GIS Department so that the maps could be updated.
- Mr. Laiuppa told the Commission that the Planning and Zoning Commission held a workshop to discuss the Comprehensive Urban Development (CUD) Plan. During that workshop a variety of zoning ideas and alternatives were discussed. This discussion revolved primarily around the Buckland Hills portion of town.

New Business

- Ms. Edwards said that she was concerned that the excess soil from the Verplanck School project would be used to fill an area adjacent to the school property where the town may be doing work on an issue with a culvert.

- Mr. Belknap and Ms. Potocki raised concern that, if this soil was to be reused, there should be some reassurance that the soil is structurally suitable for that purpose and that it could be properly vegetated.
- Ms. Edwards talked about the recent SMARTR2 meeting that had taken place earlier in the month. She said that the main point of discussion at the meeting was the rebuilding and consolidation of the elementary schools in town. The recommended option was the “3 School Option”. Ms. Edwards said that there would be a referendum to use bond money to decide what to do about the other schools.
- Mr. Laiuppa briefed the Commission about a discussion that the Planning Department had about having the Conservation Commission compile a memo or a report to be presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission. This inter-commission communication would be beneficial in that members of the Planning & Zoning Commission would stay informed about the actions of Conservation Commission that are either occurring or planned. The memo or report should include those projects that may be of interest to the Planning and Zoning Commission – such as those actions requiring permits or having a direct or indirect impact on regulated resources within the Town of Manchester.
 - Mr. Mercier expressed some concern about discussing all of the projects that the Hockanum River Linear Park Committee has going or planned.
 - Mr. Laiuppa explained that this would not be a detailed description of every action that the Hockanum River Committee takes but that there should be mention of the ongoing maintenance and more detail about any special projects that are taking place.
 - Mr. Laiuppa also reminded the group that any projects that will require a permit will be reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission anyway and that transparency between Commissions should be a positive thing for all interested parties.
- Mr. Laiuppa suggested that, in an effort to keep track of all of the projects that are occurring or planned along the Hockanum River Trail, it would be beneficial to develop a “master plan” or priority list of projects that the group is taking on. This will help to focus the efforts of the group while also maintaining continuity and consistency among those members of the committee that are working on the projects.
 - Mr. Mercier said that creating such a list would be too much effort and probably isn’t worth the time.
- Mr. Laiuppa asked the Commission if they were using any standard guidelines for trail construction and/or maintenance. He said that, since there are so many different volunteers working on the trails, it would be nice to have some very basic rules to follow so that trail related safety and construction techniques were being followed. Mr. Laiuppa said that, if the Commission does not have guidelines, he would be happy to help the Commission to research existing documents and create one for the group.

- Mr. Mercier and Mr. Belknap were very defensive of their years of experience of working on the trail. Mr. Mercier said that such guidelines were not needed by their group.
- Ms. Potocki expressed her support of the idea of having standard guidelines so that the institutional knowledge of the veteran trail maintainers was not lost. She also agreed with Mr. Laiuppa that guidelines would help to ensure that basic “rules” were followed by everyone who works on the trails.
- Mr. Laiuppa mentioned the point of discussion brought up earlier by Mr. Mercier, that they would be meeting with the with the Manchester Town Attorney, Tim O’neil, to discuss access rights to the trail at various locations in town.
- Mr. Belknap discussed the idea of adopting a set of liability forms for volunteers that would be working with the Conservation Commission groups when they are doing field work. He explained that many other groups use these forms to maintain protection of the group while also informing the volunteers of their expectations and obligations. Mr. Belknap presented the Commission with an example of a liability form from the Connecticut Forest and Park Association.
 - Mr. Mercier said that a liability form is not needed and that it is a waste of paper. He did not support the idea of adopting such a form because he felt that no-one would read it and that it didn’t mean anything.
 - Mr. Laiuppa explained that these types of forms were intended to be used so that everyone in a group has a common understanding of what they can and cannot do. Even if the form is not read in its entirety the person in charge for the day should give a briefing of what it covers and the parties would sign-off to show that they understand their limitations. The papers should be viewed as a means of legal protection for the workers as well as the organizing party.
 - Mr. Laiuppa suggested that the members of the Commission take some time to review the documents that they were presented to see if they like the language and if they would like to make any modifications to it before deciding if they wanted to adopt them.
 - Ms. Potocki suggested that the Town Attorney review any documents prior to adoption by the Commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.