

April 3, 2013

5:00 p.m.

Members Present: Susan Payne, Linda Frank, Phil Markert, Diane Dupuis, Randy Bernard, Ann Quackenbos, Alt., Betsy Corrigan, Alt, Dirk Sabin, Alt.

Staff Present: Shelley White

Others: Gary Fitzherbert

Ms. Payne, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Seated: Susan Payne, Linda Frank, Phil Markert, Randy Bernard, Betsy Corrigan, Alt (for Diane Dupuis)

Consideration of the Minutes

The Commission considered the regular meeting minutes of the Conservation Commission for February 6, 2013 and the notes from March 13, 2013.

Corrections:

It was noted that Mr. Bernard was sworn in as a regular member of the Town of Washington Conservation Commission and should be indicated as such in the minutes.

Motion:

to accept the February 6, 2013 Regular Meeting Minutes and the notes from March 13, 2013 meeting of the Conservation Commission as amended,
by Ms. Frank, seconded by Mr. Bernard, passed by 5-0 vote.

Review of Zoning Regulations

Discussion with Mr. Fitzherbert, Zoning Commission Chairman:

Ms. Payne invited Mr. Fitzherbert to discuss strengthening the zoning regulations to enhance the Conservation Commission's concerns of the environment. She asked that he provide some guidance in how the CC could effectively work with the Zoning Commission moving forward. Ms. Payne told Mr. Fitzherbert that the areas in which the Conservation Commission would like to strengthen in the zoning regulations are concerning clear cutting of trees, enhancing ridgeline protection and conservation development.

Mr. Bernard stated that he was interested in the packaged sewer treatment plants and regulations that the Town of Washington might or might not have regarding these systems. He noted that these have been an environmental issue and in theory, they work well but can have problems with changes of what goes into them. Mr. Bernard said that one of these systems might allow denser development in the Depot but we would not want these systems everywhere in Town.

There was a discussion regarding the problems regarding maintenance and cost of these systems for the municipality.

Mr. Markert feels that the Town needs to address this need but does not have the resources. He stated that the Town would have to look outside to professional resources to help deal with this development issue.

5:15 pm – Ms. Dupuis arrives.

Ms. Frank stated that she is concerned with the development of properties on steep slopes. She stated that there are no regulations to control clear cutting of trees or to protect the steep slopes in Town.

There was a brief discussion of existing steep driveways.

Mr. Fitzherbert and the Commissioners discussed engineered septic systems and the monitoring of them by the DEEP. Mr. Fitzherbert stated that the Department of Health regulates septic/sewer systems on the local or state level and the T.O.W. Zoning Regulations do not address these systems but Zoning does need an approval from the Health Department.

Mr. Bernard stated that some towns have developed ordinances around where pre engineered package plants could and could not be located within the town.

Mr. Markert asked how a consensus could be built in the Town. Mr. Fitzherbert stated that the zoning regulations should support the POCD and regulations should be revised to support the priorities of the Town as stated in the POCD. He questioned if commissions or committees do not come to the Zoning Commission to request changes/revisions in the regulations is Zoning supposed to make the decision of what regulations need revising.

There was a discussion regarding the four-year terms and strategic planning. It was noted that the POCD is meant to be a guideline for the Town and not a strategic plan.

Mr. Fitzherbert recommended that the Conservation Commission prioritize which issues they would like to address and bring a first draft of a regulation or revision of an existing regulation to the Zoning Commission to start the process.

5:50 pm Mr. Fitzherbert leaves

Continued discussion of Zoning Regulations:

There was a brief discussion regarding the revisions of the POCD drafts.

The Conservation Commission agreed that they would like to work on bringing language to the Zoning Commission for regulations regarding view shed and development on slopes. Mr. Sabin volunteered to work on the language.

The Conservation Commission discussed stonewall and noise ordinances.

Mr. Sabin explained the concept of an Agricultural Sustainability Plan for the Northwest Connecticut region. He stated that he would look in to areas that are using this type of plan.

The Commission discussed sustainability and local agriculture.

Cell Tower Update

Ms. Payne stated that the cell tower was approved for 10 Blackville Road but still needs to go before the Connecticut Siting Council. She stated that the First Selectman informed her that Homeland Towers is working on their technical report for their application to the CSC and hope to file in mid-May and that the Board of Selectman are considering whether to waive the 90-day municipal review period due to the fact that this proposal has been publicly reviewed.

Ms. Dupuis stated that she is not in favor of waiving the 90-day municipal review.

Other Business

New Preston Open Space:

The Commissioners discussed possibly work dates for the New Preston Open Space. Ms. Payne feels that it is important to establish a leader of stewardship from the New Preston community for this property.

The Commissioners agreed that they should develop a plan for what they would like to do to the property to allow access to the public and controlling invasive species.

Ms. Corrigan and Mr. Bernard feel that it is important for a field biologist to determine what exists on the property regarding species and habitats. Ms. Corrigan stated that she might have time to do some fieldwork on the property this spring.

It was the consensus of the Commission that they would work on a plan for the property before making decisions regarding access.

Budget:

Ms. Payne reviewed the Conservation Commission budget with the Commissioners. The Commissioners agreed that they should use some of the funds for a basic baseline review of the New Preston Open Space property.

Easement Monitoring:

Ms. Frank stated that all of the easement properties have been monitored.

Miscellaneous:

Ms. Frank stated that she contacted HVA regarding an overlay of water sources over a map of the town including property lines. It was the consensus of the Commission to order this overlay.

Ms. Corrigan stated that she spoke with Mr. Smith, head of the T.O.W. Highway Department, regarding controlling the growth of porcelain berry on the town right-of-ways. She will also be working with the State for the growth of this invasive on Route 109 and sections of Route 47.

Submitted subject to approval,
Shelley White, Land Use Clerk