

March 5, 2014

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

Staff Present: Shelley White

Others: Ms. Hill, Mr. Solley

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

Seated: Susan Payne, Linda Frank, Phil Markert, Randy Bernard, Diane Dupuis

Consideration of the Minutes

The Commission considered the regular meeting minutes of the Conservation Commission for February 12, 2014.

Motion:

to accept the February 12, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Conservation Commission as submitted,

by Ms. Frank, seconded by Ms. Dupuis, passed by 5-0 vote.

Report of Fracking Mtg 2/28 in Kent

Ms. Hill, Land Use Administrator, attended a meeting on Friday February 28, 2014 in the Town of Kent organized by the 350.org, which is a local group that is working to stop fracking waste from being stored in Connecticut. She distributed various handouts on the subject (available in the Land Use Office).

Ms. Hill explained that the state of PA, with its deposits of Marcellus shale, has 6000 fracking wells and a 30-year contract with the natural gas companies. The state of PA does not have any more room to store its fracking waste so it has been sending them to Ohio, New York and West Virginia. Ms. Hill discussed the various ways fracking contaminates both air and groundwater. She noted that there is a documentary, "Fracking Hell," which shows how the people in Pennsylvania are living with this pollution.

Ms. Hill stated that PA is looking for new states to send its fracking waste to and CT is one of them. She informed the Commission that this meeting organized by 350.org is working to get support for bill SB 237, to ban the storage of fracking waste in CT.

Ms. Hill listed several things that can be done to support SB 237:

1. Write letters and/or email your state representatives and senators. Tell friends and family to do the same.
2. Write letters to the editor and op ed pieces for the local newspapers.
3. If you are involved with an environmental organization see if they will mail out notices to their membership or postal patrons of the whole town.
4. Organize/Sponsor a showing of "Gas Land I" and/or "Gas Land II."
5. Contact your selectman and ask him to talk to our representatives.

Ms. Hill stated that if someone is interested in helping they could contact Evan Abramson at evanabramson@gmail.com.

Zoning Regulation Recommendation - Ridgeline Protection

Mr. Solley, Zoning Chairman, was present to discuss the Conservation Commissions recommendation to enhance ridgeline protection with viewscape development. He stated that when considering zoning regulations he looks at how enforceable the regulation would be.

Mr. Sabin stated that he drafted these recommendations but still needs to include graphic backup. He explained how he sees that there is a way for the ridgeline property owner to get the view that they would like without stripping the hillside of existing trees and vegetation. He noted that it would not be simple to codify because it would be site specific.

Mr. Sabin discussed an approach that implements en-framed views that where selected trees and vegetation would remain and the woodland along the ridge top maintained. He suggests using directional corridors that when viewed from the opposite hillside would not be visible.

There was a brief discussion regarding other towns that may have regulations that protect the development of ridgelines.

The commission and Mr. Solley discussed enforceability of regulations. Mr. Sabin feels that regulatory framework should allow the property owner to create a view but work within the town's regulations. It was the consensus of everyone present that monitoring would be necessary.

There was a discussion regarding ridgelines as regulated areas similar to wetlands. Mr. Markert suggested identifying areas that need regulating as a Ridgeline Zone. The commissioners and Mr. Solley discussed regulating designated ridgeline areas through the Special Permit process.

Ms. Payne stated that this is in keeping with the Town's philosophy of preserving rural character.

Mr. Sabin feels that the regulations should educate the property owner about their options.

Mr. Sabin's draft titled "Viewshed Thinning, An Approach to Preserve Ridgelines While Creating More Interesting Views" is available in the Land Use Office.

Mr. Solley stated that the Zoning Commission is in the process of revising the Zoning Regulations. The first item they have been working on is minor corrections in Sections 1-12 and they will proceed to work on Sections 13-21. He suggested that the Conservation Commission develop some language, possibly use examples from other towns and bring it to the Zoning Commission for discussion.

The commissioners and Mr. Solley discussed educating the public on Ridgeline Protection via the Town website.

The commissioners discussed examples of ridgeline or steep slope properties that have protected the viewshed.

Other Business

Zoning Regulations:

The commissioners discussed lighting regulations.

Cell Tower Update:

Ms. Payne stated that a farmer at 17 New Preston Hill in New Milford has leased some land to AT&T for a cell tower. The commissioners discussed the location and topography of the property.

Ms. Dupuis stated that she read the cell tower report for the proposed cell tower behind the Town Garage and does not agree with the Town waiving the 90-day waiting period. She feels that it is necessary to perform due diligence on each cell tower site.

Recreation Plan:

Ms. Payne stated that Mr. Sabin had created a Town Recreation Plan in 1997. Mr. Sabin suggested that the group keys in on the town wide arboretum and an inventory of trees.

Town Plan of Conservation and Development:

Ms. Payne and Ms. Frank reviewed the draft of chapters 5 & 6 of the POCD and would forward their comments to the Planning Commission before their next meeting on March 6, 2014.

Stewardship:

Ms. Payne volunteered to work on the budget with Mr. Solley.

One Green Circle:

The commissioners discussed recommended planting of native trees on the property.

Miscellaneous

Ms. Payne stated that the Solarize Washington - Roxbury campaign is going well with a total of 27 systems.

The Town has received 12 responses for the RFQ for the D.O.T. Grant

Ms. White would get estimates to have the Points of Interest Town Map reprinted.

Ms. Payne asked the commissioners to contact her if they are interested in attending any of the upcoming Northwest Council of Government meetings.

Mr. Bernard reported the Department of Health has issued an advisory on blue green algae.

Privilege of the Floor

No one from the public was present.

Adjournment

Motion:

to adjourn at 6:40 by Ms. Payne

Ms. Payne adjourned the meeting.

Submitted subject to approval,
Shelley White Land Use Clerk