

## February 4, 2004

**Present:** Susan Payne Chairperson, Kelly Boling, Elizabeth Corrigan, Joe Gitterman, Phillip Markert

**Alternates:** Diane Dupuis, Elaine Luckey

**Guests:** Jack Field, First Selectman Richard Sears

**Members are asked to call Susan Payne at home (868-9348) if they are unable to attend a meeting.**

Susan Payne Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

No Alternates were seated.

**MOTION: Approval of the minutes from the January 7, 2004 meeting of the Washington Conservation Commission, Betsy Corrigan made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 7th meeting, Kelly Boling seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**Referrals from other Commissions:** The Conservation Commission received a referral from the Planning Commission on a two lot resubdivision for Taylor at 38 New Preston Hill Road. The Planning Commission will receive this application at its February 10, 2004 meeting and a public hearing will be set. The applicant is proposing a 4.1 acre conservation easement on the eastern boundary of the property. Ms. Payne is aware that Ms. Taylor, the property owner has been in contact with Steep Rock Association about this conservation easement. Kelly Boling explained the open space set aside requirements for the Planning Commission. After review of the map Betsy Corrigan commented that the proposed easement has habitat value as well as potential for aquifer protection. Mr. Boling noted the proximity of the Judea Water Company well to 38 New Preston Hill. Susan Payne referred to the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development recommendations on protecting water quality. Phil Markert brought up the concern of the location of the large leaching fields for the proposed house near a public water supply. Members were in agreement that this property cannot be seen from the road so a site visit would be needed. Pam Osborne, secretary will check with Janet Hill Planning Commission secretary about coordinating with the Planning Commission on a site visit.

**West Church Hill Road Conservation Easement:** no update

**Management and Monitoring of Town Properties:** no new information

**Subcommittee Reports:**

**Canoe Brook -** no activity

**School Connection -** no new information

**Cell Tower -** no activity

**Land Use Data Management -** Kelly has set a meeting for February 18th.

**Road Discontinuation -** Kelly reports that they will meet next Wednesday and continue work on a draft for possible additions to the Zoning Regulations for discontinued/abandoned public highways.

**Flora & Fauna -** Betsy Corrigan is meeting Friday with Natalie Dyer about ongoing knotweed

eradication. Betsy has also spoken with Margie Purnell and Addie Roberts about Earth Day activities, the date for Earth Day is April 25th.

**Greenway** - Susan Payne reports that work on the guide is moving along, Cyndy Brisset has agreed to do artistic design for the guide.

**Land Use Info/Welcome Pamphlet** - no new information

**Scenic Road** - Joe Gitterman is having a work session this Saturday to continue work on the "How-To-Packet" for the Scenic Road Ordinance.

**Water Resources** - no activity

### **Other Business:**

Susan Payne attended the January 27th meeting of Commission Chairmen. At this meeting it was determined that the Conservation Commission will establish an Open Space Subcommittee to handle the Open Space Plan/ Fund. It was Susan Payne's recommendation to invite a member from each land use commission and ask members of the former Open Space Inventory Subcommittee if they would be interested in serving on the Open Space Subcommittee. As Ms. Payne has stated in the past the first step should be to take the open space issue to the public. Jack Field guided members in a discussion on the 2003 Open Space Plan which recommended funding in the amount of 0.5 mills per year. This funding would be split between an Open Space Fund and Tax Abatement Program becoming an "Open Space Program". The two mechanisms for tax abatement are an easement granted to the town with the owner petitioning the town for tax abatement and secondly creating a 490 program for open space which would have conditions on permanent protection. The latter brought up questions of legality. Before further discussion Jack Field and Kelly Boling will draft a letter to Atty. Michael Zizka about the legality of having PA 490 open space with restrictions for permanent protection. Joe Gitterman noted that at present people gift their land to land trusts and those parcels come off the tax roles. Mr. Field agreed 490 open space without permanent preservation is not good for the town, is the town willing to spend money on tax abatement to get open space. First Selectman Richard Sears asked open space at what cost? Kelly added that you need dialog with the public before a vote at a town meeting. Phil Markert brought up the idea of added sales or conveyance tax to raise funds. Jack Field commented to members that you don't want to drive people out of town with taxes. Susan brought members back to the topic of an action plan for implementation of the open space plan. How to effectively educate people and create awareness. Mr. Sears agrees there needs to be dialog and education with townspeople; you need to find out people's thoughts not aimed at changing their minds. The town newsletter will be coming out in the spring, a good way to start? (The deadline line for submission to the newsletter will be 3/15/04) Susan Payne, Phil Markert and Betsy Corrigan conservation members who served on the open space inventory subcommittee were interested in helping with the "Open Space Committee". Susan Payne will contact members of the Open Space Inventory Subcommittee and other land use commissions looking for interested people. Ms. Payne asked members to continue review of the 2003 Open Space Plan.

Dick Sears mentioned to members a program on storm water runoff which was being aired on the weather channel (68) tonight at 8:00pm & 11:00pm, which might be of interest to members.

Susan Payne has information about an organization that Deb Avery is a member of called EMR Policy Institute, if anyone is interested.

Mr. Sears forwarded a letter from Keith D. Palmer, Chairman of the Barkhamsted Conservation Commission to the Conservation Commission regarding ridgeline preservation.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00pm.

Next Scheduled meeting of the Conservation Commission is March 3, 2004 at 5:00pm.

Submitted subject to approval,

Pamela L. Osborne, Secretary