

April 2, 2008

Members Present: Susan Payne, Linda Frank, Kelly Boling

Alternate Present: Diane Dupuis, Ric Sonder, Betsy Corrigan

Staff Present: Shelley White

Susan Payne called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m. and seated members Linda Frank, Kelly Boling, and herself and Alternates Betsy Corrigan and Ric Sonder.

Susan Payne welcomed new member Ric Sonder. He has served on the Roxbury Conservation Commission as Chairman. He served on the Planning Commission. He director of Maritus at the Roxbury Land Trust and was instrumental in the Save our Farms Campaign.

Consideration of the Minutes:

The March 5, 2008 Regular Meeting Minutes were accepted as amended. Page 1 under Referrals and New Projects, 7th line from beginning of the paragraph should read, "She would like to carve off a little piece of the property with the original 19th century house." Page 3, under Archaeological Resources Protection, second line, should read "Ms. Payne, Betsy Corrigan and Sarah Gager from Planning attended." Also, under Open Space, 2nd sentence should read, "Tim Abbott, the leader of the Greenprint Project, will be here to do an update."

Motion: To accept the March 5, 2008 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Conservation Commission as amended. By Linda Frank, Seconded by Susan Payne, passed 3-0-3. Ms. Corrigan, Mr. Sonder & Mr. Boling abstaining because they were not at the last meeting.

Referrals or new projects:

Ms. Payne brought to the attention of the Conservation Commission the revised Conservation Easement for the Abella property off Scofield Hill. There are numerous changes on the proposed revision. Ms. Payne requested that Ms. White send out a copy of the revised easement to the members of the Conservation Commission. Ms. Payne would like the first and revised easement to be reviewed by the Commission. Paul Szymanski, engineer, stated that the proposed changes allow for ATVs and more trees to be cut, etc. Ms. Payne suggested that Szymanski should be invited to the next meeting. She also suggested that member s of the Conservation Commission Compare the first conservation easement for the Abella property to the most recent easement and provide comments. If comments are not available for the May 6th Planning Commission Meeting Janet Hill, Land Use Coordinator should be notified and it will be continued into the June Planning Commission Meeting. Ms. Payne offered to email Mr. Szymanski asking for an explanation of the changes in the easement.

Greenprint Reports and Review of Maps:

Conservation Commission reviewed the Greenprint Maps from Tim Abbott. The Farmland Preservation Study, The Large Forest Habitat Study, & Drinking Water Resources Maps were reviewed. Ms. Payne said that they are closer to having more usable maps. Diane Dupuis suggested that the Drinking Water Resources Map needs to show the aquifers. Betsy Corrigan asked if TPL's ultimate goal was to purchase land. Ms. Payne said that its goal is to provide layers of maps and layers of data that anybody can access. The data is meant to be a tool to help improve regional planning.

Scenic Road Designation:

Ms. Payne said that she, Kelly Boling, and Sarah Gager & Paul Frank of the Planning has been working on a Conservation Easement model for both regulatory and voluntary easements. So that someone that is planning a project will know what is expected and it will cut down time and cost. Mr. Boling requested that the commission looks at the proposed document and discuss any suggestions it at the May 7th meeting. Mr. Boling stated that the future phase of this project is to develop terms and language for different landscape types and also ask for baselines for monitoring purposes. Ms. Payne said that the property will determine how detailed the baselines need to be because they are more expensive with more detail.

Scenic Road:

Ms. Payne asked what the Conservation Commission and the Town of Washington can do to protect Route 202 from becoming a four lane highway. One thing to do is get State Scenic Road Designation that would start at the intersection of Route 45 and 202 to include New Preston Falls and up to the town border. Mr. Boling suggested a boundary change that would extend up to Mt. Tom Pass Way and would include Mt. Tom pond and State Park and it should include the area from the south side of Christian Street to include the falls. He believes that it would strengthen the application. Ms. Payne acknowledged that Mr. Boling has worked hard and has done great work. Mr. Boling also suggested that he would like to get letters of support from Jodi Rell, Roraback, O'Neill, Chris Murphy...state officials. Ms. Payne suggested that maybe they should ask HVA to provide a support letter. Ms. Payne offered to contact Mr. Roraback, & HVA. Mr. Boling said he could contact Ms. Rell, Steep Rock Association. Ms. Frank offered to contact Chris Murphy. Ms. Payne asked Mr. Boling if a letter could be drafted with the general information of the area. Ms. Payne asked if historical houses and structures should be named. Mr. Boling showed the pictures that he would be sending with the Scenic Road Application. Mr. Boling stated that the application should also include the Existing and Perceived Open Space map. Letters of support should go to the State with the application as well. Ms. Payne offered to ask Mr. Ian Branson, a Forester, which is knowledgeable of the geology of the area to write a support letter.

Archaeological Resources Protection:

Ms. Corrigan stated that the Town of Washington Planning Regulations makes reference to protecting the archaeological resources of the area. So, Ms. Corrigan has worked on a proposed amendment to the planning regulations to better define archaeological sites and preservation. Ms. Corrigan created a proposed procedure of the process. Step 1 would an application comes before a Land Use board and the project area is reviewed. This would entail determining if the project falls within the polygons shown on the Archaeological Sensitivity Map. The Office of State Archaeology (OSA) will review potential sensitivity. If OSA determines that the site is in a polygon they would continue to Step 2. Step 2(Phase I Survey) would require test pits that would determine significance of the site. If there is no significance the process ends here. Step 3(Phase II Survey) would be the next step if there is significance. This would entail larger test pits to determine the degree of significance. If there is the possibility of significance, then leave it alone (conserve *in situ*). If it is not possible to conserve *in situ* then move on to Step 4. Step 4(Phase III Survey/Data Recovery) would be to excavate a percentage of the site and to conserve most of the site rather than fully excavate it. Artifacts are catalogued and studied and returned to the property owner. Ms. Corrigan noted that this is a state service and that there is no cost to the applicant. Mr. Sonder asked if the Phase I & Phase II Survey are paid by the applicant. Ms. Corrigan was not sure and she would check into that. Mr. Boling asked if the Planning or Zoning Commissions have given any feedback. Ms. Payne said that Sarah Gager from Planning has been working on this and that the Conservation Commission can present what they have to the Zoning Commission when they are ready. Ms. Corrigan stated that many towns (about 40) in Connecticut already have Archaeological Regulations.

Mr. Sonder stated that Zoning and Planning should be involved but that it would be odd regulations in both. Ms. Payne agreed and said that the planning regulations mention preservation of archaeological sites under the open space section 5.8. In the zoning regulations under section 13 there were a number of different places that archaeological sites were referenced. Ms. Payne said that these regulations, in her opinion could be expanded. Ms. Payne stated that Mark Lyon, First Selectman for the Town of Washington is concerned about the burden of more regulations on the property owner. Ms. Corrigan said that there would be a prescreening. Nick Bellantoni will be asked to provide a map for Land Use to help with the prescreening process. The idea is to make the process easy. Ms. Frank asked if someone were to buy a piece of property would they be required to come into the office and would they then be told as to what can be built on the possible piece of property. Ms. Payne said the next step is to get the language established for the regulations. Mr. Boling suggested that maybe Sarah Gager could produce a draft. Ms. Corrigan said she will ask Sarah Gager. Ms. Payne said she will ask Gary Fitzherbert in Zoning. Ms. Frank asked if the commission should ask a builder. Mr. Sonder asked if the state had power. Ms. Corrigan said that it is the town's responsibility. Ms. Payne said that it is up to each municipality to monitor and predict how stringent they want to be. Mr. Sonder said that a much simpler regulation would say that 'you must check if the area falls into a polygon and there is a procedure in a manual that you must follow'. Ms. Payne asked Mr. Sonder to help draft some simple language. Mr. Sonder said he would.

Cell Tower:

Mr. Boling stated that she understand why people do not like the fake tree cell tower but she thinks it may have looked better than the one that was put up in New Preston. Ms. Dupuis said the fake tree is much larger than the tower that was installed. The installed tower was supposed to be brown and the fake tree would look odd as there aren't any conifers in the vicinity.

Ridgeline Protection:

Ms. Frank stated that there was a question regarding a slight change in the zoning regulations that try to keep from having enormous structures built on steep/ridgeline areas. The architect is having trouble calculating in his design with these changes. Mr. Sonder stated that people tend to raise the grade. It was suggested to Zoning that the height of the house should be calculated from the existing grade instead of a created grade. That was accepted by Zoning and language was created that defines what how to calculate the average and where to measure from. The architect stated that there are better ways to measure and simply took the average of the measurements around the entire perimeter of the house. Mr. Sonder agreed that the method was correct and the wording would use some adjustment. Ms. Frank said that there will be a public hearing on May 15th and she will find out if the Conservation Commission was asked to provide comments. She said will draft something for the meeting so that it will go on record. Mr. Sonder said that there has never been anything done on ridgeline protection and if that is something the commission would like to do. Mr. Boling said the Conservation Commission would like to do it but doesn't think Zoning is interested. Ms. Frank said she would like to talk to the people in Kent to see how successful the zones are that had been established. Mr. Boling believes that they are happy with it and the difficult thing is the need for good mapping which costs money. Ms. Payne stated that there is money in the budget for mapping and that she is in favor of keeping ridgeline protection going. Ms. Corrigan suggested that something basic be done such as not allowing clear cutting but maybe seasonal or selective cutting. Mr. Sonder said that the areas of concern be defined in terms of mapping and the elevation be picked for that particular area. Mr. Boling suggested that there needs to be a map that triggers closer scrutiny.

Other Business:

Ms. Payne stated that she read in the Planning minutes that there will be mobile units mounted on existing

sign posts that read oncoming cars speed. They will be 12x12 inches.

16 Titus Garage Committee update: A request for a dog park was discussed and not favored. There are two acres available and this could be used for housing. There will be perk testing and demolition and cleanup of the old garage. The old metal building will be taken down but the foundation will stay. It was suggested that it could be used for a pavilion or something.

Ms. Payne stated that Open Space has money in its acquisition fund. Mr. Boling had a recommendation that the Town of Washington should solicit and publicize request of land owners that would be interested in selling some land. Ms. Dupuis said that the land owners should be informed of the guidelines. Ms. Payne said this deserves more thought. Mr. Boling said that we could solicit proposals and the commission could recommend a site. Ms. Frank suggested that we have a map that shows properties and the criteria that the Conservation Commission is looking for and then approach the land owner. Ms. Payne suggested that the ideal plan would contain open space criteria and the ability to use part of the property for affordable housing. Mr. Boling offered to draft something for the next meeting.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting by Susan Payne.

Susan Payne adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley White

Land Use Clerk

4-17-08