

June 1, 2005

Present: Susan Payne, Chairperson, Kelly Boling, Elizabeth Corrigan

Alternates: Linda Frank, Dan Sherr

Guests: Open Space Committee Members Patte Doran, Eileen Hearn and Rod Funston, First Selectman Dick Sears

Members are asked to email (conservation@washingtonct.org) or call Pam at (868-0423) if you can not attend a meeting.

Chairperson Susan Payne called the meeting to order at 5:10pm and seated Linda Frank and Dan Sherr as alternates.

MOTION: Approval of the minutes from the May 4, 2005 meeting of the Washington Conservation Commission, Kelly Boling made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 4th meeting. Dan Sherr seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Depot Study

The Chairperson turned the meeting over to Dan Sherr, Chairman of the Open Space Committee for discussion on "The Depot Study". Mr. Sherr had emailed members information for discussion which included a map showing boundaries of the Depot, background information on "New Urbanism" and three questions to ponder. Dan began by stating that the Advisory Committee is used as a tool to pull information from the townspeople of what their visualization of the depot is? He asked members to give input to four questions: What is the Depot? What don't you like about the current Depot? What do you like about the current Depot? If you could wave a magic wand over the Depot what would it produce? Before discussion began Dan explained about the Charrette which will take place on June 16th, 17th & 18th, this will be an intense informational session to visualize for the consulting team. The firm doing the planning for the Depot Study is using the "new urbanism" approach. Discussion began on "**What is the Depot?**" boundary wise Kelly Boling felt the "gateway" should be included; Patte Doran suggested the "lit" area which extends up to Riverwoods on River Road. Dan asked about areas within the Depot available for development, Kelly Boling made the suggestion of going up with volume - building on existing footprints. Susan Payne asked members how they felt about building on hillsides. Kelly Boling answered you have to be mindful of view scapes. Patte Doran felt there should be defined village lines. Discussion shifted to Cook Street and the Town Plan of Conservation and Development's suggestion that the business district be extended north. Linda Frank floated an idea used in Woodbury of when a house becomes a business the second floor is required to be residential. Members discussed whether or not businesses should be extended up Cook Street and felt because of the interesting terrain and narrow street it should be kept all residential. Next Mr. Sherr asked for input on the boundary going out Route 47, Linda Frank felt it should extend to the bridge at Hidden Valley. Dan noted that from the intersection of Blackville Road out to the bridge by Hidden Valley there is a different type of village center reflected and Kelly Boling felt you could have creative redevelopment in this area. The left side going out is preserved but on the right side is a good location for residential development. Dan asked about including the entrance of Bee Brook Crossing in the village center. Out past the bridge you have private uncontrolled land; Kelly interjected at some point it would be great to be able to connect the village centers (Washington, Marbledale) with greenways. Members went on to identify flat land in the Depot: Washington Primary School, River Road, Old Town Garage, Town Hall area, and Bee Brook corridor. Susan Payne ended the discussion by stating that a lot could evolve, tiny parcels of open space are

critical. Patte Doran agreed you need beauty spots. **What don't you like about the current Depot?** The following were dislikes: the traffic pattern, lack of walking space, speed of traffic, the backside of all building face the river, old town garage site, character of architecture after the flood, water protection and accessibility. Patte Doran expressed the need of not wanting to loose what we have, don't want to become another Ridgefield. Dick Sears added the lack of public spaces; there are lots of private spaces. **What do you like about the current Depot?** Positives about the depot were the energy of the Depot, you can park and walk, pedestrian signs have slowed traffic, rebirth (new families moving in on Cook and School Streets), absence of chain stores, the variety of trees and the buffers along the Shepaug. Eileen Hearn ended discussing by expressing her favorite spot as the bridge and river. **If you could wave a magic wand over the Depot what would it produce?** Members felt that the state roads need work, a traffic calming agent is needed and more parking. There was discussion if architecturally the Depot should look more like New Preston. Kelly stated that you are limited by sewage/waste disposal issues. Do you really want a "look", at present it's organic, Dan closed by saying to keep in mind that the depot was "factory hollow". Members are asked to get their thoughts and comments to Janet Hill in the Land Use office at 868-0423 or her email is janet.hill@washingtonct.org .

First Selectman, Dick Sears took a moment to address the Conservation Commission about the Open Space Acquisition Fund and the ability to obtain money from the fund. At some point money may be needed to evaluate parcels, Dick had a proposal written by David Miles, town attorney where as the Chairperson of the Conservation Commission would authorize the Board of Selectman use of up to \$6,000 from the fund. Members were in agreement with the proposal. Discussion ensued about the need for withdraw of larger amount of funds for actual purchasing of property. It was concluded that this was another process which needs to be resolved; Susan Payne would like to get it resolved before you're up against it.

Review of Natural Resource Inventory Report's recommendations to select projects for implementation: tabled till next month.

Management and Monitoring of Town properties: Linda will assign monitoring over the next few months. Susan Payne mentioned that there was an infringement on the easement for the property on 121 West Church Hill Road, by the new owners. Susan expressed the need for signage and documentation of properties when the town takes easements. There has to be a process which needs to be communicated with Planning and Inland Wetlands Commissions because these easements ultimately end up the responsibility of the Conservation Commission.

Subcommittee Reports

Open Space Committee: covered above

Ridgeline Protection: Linda Frank reported that the Zoning Commission reviewed the recommendations presented; they were going to make changes in some of the language, but appreciated the work done by the Conservation Commission.

Archaeological Resources Protection: Betsy Corrigan has decided to give basic information to Conservation members.

Betsy Corrigan informed members of a vernal pool being destroyed on Carmel Hill Road. The present owner filled in the vernal pool and removed the forest under story on 3 acres. Betsy is concerned because this was a vernal pool which provided water for wildlife, the trees may die because their root systems were smothered and they imported soils which might grow invasives. Betsy was looking for input on putting together an informational packet for prospective and new property owners. Suggestions were information on the town web site and having an informational meeting in the Fall.

Land Use Data Management: Kelly Boling stated that discs are available with the Natural Resource Inventory GIS dated and funds have been allocated for a projector.

Greenway: no activity to report.

Scenic Road: no report

Canoe Brook: no report

School Connection: no report

Cell Tower Update: Members were in support of CT filing an Amicus Brief Case No. 04-1515 Diane Dupuis will respond on behalf of the Conservation Commission.

Flora & Fauna: Betsy Corrigan handed out the final document "Invasive Plants of Washington".

Water Resources: no report

Referrals from other Commissions:

Myfield: Kelly Boling and Betsy Corrigan excused themselves and left for the evening. Dan Sherr, Linda Frank and Susan Payne went ahead and took a brief look at the Inland Wetland file on Myfield at 7 Mygatt Road. There is a potential conservation easement. The layout reflects the property. Members were concerned with the access to the affordable units, is it doable? In further investigation it was discovered that there would be deed restriction which would not need to come to the Conservation Commission for comment.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.

Next scheduled meeting of the Washington Conservation Commission is July 6, 2005 at 5:00pm.

Submitted subject to approval,

Pamela L. Osborne, Secretary