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**Town of Vernon
Conservation Commission Meeting
Monday, December 16, 2013
7:00 P.M.
Council Chambers, 3rd Floor, 14 Park Place
Rockville/Vernon, CT
Minutes**

1. Call to Order & roll call

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Tom Ouellette. Commissioners present were Tom Ouellette, Ryan Goad, Russ Kunz, and Logan Senack. Town staff present was Economic Development Coordinator Shaun Gately. Visitors present were Ann Letendre & Virginia Gingras. Vice chairman Ryan Goad was acting recording secretary.

2. Administrative Actions

A. Acceptance of Minutes of November 18, 2013.

Commissioners received emailed copies of the minutes for November 18, 2013 and submitted proposed amendments by email prior to this meeting. Commissioner Logan Senack moved to accept the minutes as amended by email. Ryan Goad seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote in favor of acceptance.

B. Communications received

The Commission received a membership renewal notice from the Connecticut Land Conservation Council along with notices of a March 15 conference at Wesleyan University and observance of Connecticut Land Conservation Day on April 23 at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford.

**C. Application related correspondences: IWC & PZC applications:
Application (PZ-2013-22) of the Vernon Planning Department for proposed changes to the Vernon Zoning Regulations to add Section 21 to establish regulations and map to create a Rockville Village District Overlay Zone**

Mr. Gately informed the Commission that a Village District exists within the Rockville section of town, but this district includes four separate use districts (i.e., zoning designations): Historic District – Downtown Business & Residential, Historic District – Industrial, Historic District – Residential Commercial, and Planned Neighborhood Development (as per the 2009 Zoning Regulations). The Planning Department proposes to incorporate these into a uniform Village District. The goal is to retain village character and architecture during new development. The Commission had no comment.

D. Letters sent by Conservation Commission last month

The Commission submitted a letter to the Inland Wetlands Commission (IWC) regarding the application of Andre Charbonneau and Clarence Welti for residential development at 133 Washington Street (IWC-2013-05). IWC extended the hearing for this application to 12/17/2013.

E. Organizational considerations:

2014 Meeting schedule

The Commission discussed the 2014 meeting schedule promulgated prior to this meeting. Chairman Ouellette informed the Commission he will not be present for the planned January 13, 2014 regular meeting. He proposed cancellation of that meeting and scheduling of a special meeting on January 27, 2014. The other Commissioners agreed with this plan. None of the Commissioners identified any known schedule conflicts with the remainder of the meeting schedule, and Chairman Ouellette submitted his approval of the 2014 meeting schedule to Mr. Gately.

3. Continuing Business

Chairman Ouellette moved agenda Item D ahead as the first order of business due to the presence of Ms. Letendre and Ms. Gingras. This Commission followed agenda Item D with Item C to allow Commissioner Senack to present information before departing at 8:00 p.m. This Commission then returned to agenda items A & B in succession.

D. Open Space Program

Conservation Commission – Open Space Task Force consolidation

Ms. Letendre identified the Open Space Task Force (OSTF) as a Conservation Commission subcommittee, but has been unable to identify a provision in the Town Charter or Ordinances to support this designation. Mr. Gately suggested the designation may have been a Town Council resolution. According to Ms. Letendre, a number of conditions pertained to the original formation of the OSTF in 1998. One of these was preparation of an Open Space Plan, which required representation of members of the community at large along with local and regional organizations with interests in open space preservation (e.g. the Friends of Valley Falls, Friends of the Hockanum River Linear Park, Northern Connecticut Land Trust [NCLT], Appalachian Mountain Club).

The 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) incorporated the Open Space Plan. There has been significant acquisition of open space properties since that time (e.g., the state-owned Tankerhoosen Wildlife Management Area, the NCLT-owned Talcottville Gorge property), which has resulted in approximately 16-17% of the Town's land area preserved as open space. The current open space preservation priority is the Strong Farm.

There is less urgency to acquire or protect parcels as open space since 2000 due to successful preservation efforts.

The OSTF has met infrequently since March 2013 rather than the previous norm of monthly meetings. Ms. Letendre believes semiannual OSTF meetings are sufficient, with special meetings held in the interim if required. This would require no change to the Town Charter or Ordinances, nor any additional Town Council resolutions. This Commission, Ms. Letendre, Ms. Gingras, and Mr. Gately held a long discussion debating the purpose and organization of OSTF, meeting schedules and public notice requirements, OSTF's relation to this Commission, and the possibility of designating OSTF as an Advisory Committee to the Conservation Commission (rather than incorporating OSTF into the Conservation Commission) to preserve its relations and availability to other community and regional organizations with interests in open space.

At the end of the discussion, Ms. Letendre proposed quarterly OSTF meetings, with Commissioner Senack proposing their meetings be held at 6:45 p.m. to precede this Commission's 7:00 p.m. meetings.

C. Intertown collaboration

Commissioner Senack contacted Matt Bordeaux of the Manchester Conservation Commission regarding intertown collaboration, and suggested events that both towns might hold together. Mr. Bordeaux planned to discuss the proposal with his commission and Mr. Senack expected his response by mid-January. Commissioner Senack departed at 8:00 p.m.

A. Invasive aquatic plants and lakes management

2013 Final report/2014 Planned activities

Chairman Ouellette met with Bruce Dinnie & George Knoecklein. Mr. Knoecklein gave a report of activities in past year and a plan for next year. The report of completed activities identified significant expansion of variable leaf milfoil in Middle Bolton Lake that will likely require a herbicide treatment in 2014. There is a small amount of milfoil in Upper Bolton Lake that may be treatable by suction harvesting or hand pulling. DEEP is establishing a rapid permitting process to allow more flexibility to respond quickly to infestations. Mr. Knoecklein identified curly leaf pond weed in all ponds he tested. This weed grows then goes dormant early in the growing season. Mr. Knoecklein identified fanwort at the outlet of Tankerhoosen Lake, which he believes is due to transport by boat based on the lack of fanwort in the river upstream of the pond or within upper portions of the pond. He suggested the Town develop a boat monitoring and education program and prepare for a 2014 herbicide application for the fanwort. Additionally, Valley Falls Pond will likely require a herbicide treatment in 2014 due to milfoil infestation. The Dobsonville Pond water chestnut infestation will be removed by hand. Finally, Paper Mill Pond received a herbicide treatment in 2013 due to milfoil, and will be reinspected in 2014.

Didymo Signage

Jane Seymour of DEEP, the Belding and Tankerhoosen Wildlife Management Areas' manager, has received didymo signage. Chairman Ouellette was not sure if they have been placed.

B. Bolton Lakes Issues

ERT Report

The ERT report is still not complete, but will hopefully be finished by the end of the calendar year.

Regional Conservation Commissions meeting

There was a November 5, 2013 meeting of Bolton, Coventry, Vernon, and Tolland Conservation Commission Representatives. The commissions formed the Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance, which will meet monthly. Karl Prewo and Richard Jewell of the Friends of Bolton Lakes met with the various commissioners.

Attendees discussed joining the Connecticut Federation of Lakes, and meeting with forestry and watershed protection ERT members to get recommendations for lake preservation. The Alliance wishes to preserve properties along Upper Bolton Lake in Tolland that are currently for sale. The goal is preservation of open space to protect the stand of Atlantic White Cedar on the lake along with lake water quality. The Alliance wants to develop a watershed management plan for the three lakes. Finally, they will try to meet with NCLT to discuss open space preservation around Upper Bolton Lake.

Friends of Bolton Lakes activities

The Friends of Bolton Lakes are developing a resident volunteer program to perform water quality and aquatic invasives monitoring using volunteers. Existing grant funding is available to purchase a dissolved oxygen/pH/conductivity meter.

E. Website revision

Vice Chairman Goad provided the other Commissioners with a draft webpage for organic lawn care to replace the current page on natural fertilizers. He will incorporate the current pros & cons of natural vs. synthetic fertilizers into the draft page and provide the Commissioners with the second draft for review and discussion.

4. New Business

None

5. Other Goals

None

6. Adjournment

Vice Chairman Goad moved to adjourn, with Commissioner Kunz seconding the motion.
Chairman Ouellette adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


C. Ryan Goad
Vice Chairman

