

MCC—DRAFT

Milford Conservation Commission Regular Meeting

Tuesday July 23, 2012. 6:00 PM

Parsons Government Complex, Employee Lunchroom, 70 West River Street, Milford, Ct. 06460

MINUTES

Mr. Poutray called the meeting to order at 6:15.

Members attending: William Poutray (ch), Claire Casey, Dan Drago, Steve Johnson, Jerry Loiselle, Oden Seaholm

Absent: William M. Blotney, Keith Dunn, Maureen Mauro

Staff attending: Meg Greene (rec sec)

Public comment

None.

Previous meeting minutes

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the minutes from the June 19, 2013, meeting.

Old Business

WEPAWAUG WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Mr. Johnson said the grant status on this item is pending, having incorporated a correction from the River Alliance. The goal is to buy water testing equipment. The Jeniam Foundation grant to “train the trainers” is also pending, with the current plan being to train Steve, Bill, and Lori Romick at Earthplace in Westport. These three people will train other volunteers. He detailed specifics of the program and outreach opportunities. He said that during the water testing enrichment program this summer, he took 18 youngsters to test the Wepawaug at Eisenhower Park and that the kids loved the program. He endorsed expanding the class next summer in a drive to create “citizen scientists.”

Mr. Poutray noted a need to contact upstream cities and get them involved. **Mr. Drago** discussed dredging of the river and **Mr. Poutray** noted that while an engineering study about dredging has been done, no funding for actual dredging has been procured. **Mr. Johnson** noted that if the river is just dredged without an educational component and without plans to reduce silting and water pollution, the problem will recur, with runoff and leaf disposal progressively turning Eisenhower Pond and the duck ponds into marshes that do not perform flood control functions or support healthy plant and animal (fish) life. **Mr. Poutray** said that part of the point of dredging is to create an environment where wildlife can thrive and that the impact of septic systems in the watershed should be evaluated. **Mr. Loiselle** offered his personal boat to take anyone who wants to do inspections to points of interest.

COMMISSION MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Poutray stated that the mission statement must incorporate statutory requirements for Conservation Commissions and must be mindful of not overstepping city agencies such as the Inland Wetlands Agency. He noted that Open Space inventories are part of the mandate of conservation commissions, but that the complexity of the task made this hard to accomplish with a committee of volunteers. **Mr. Johnson** provided an update on the spreadsheet he is working on for the inventory, estimating that it is $\frac{3}{4}$ done, having accounted for 250 properties. He has encountered discrepancies between GIS, deeds and maps. He noted that the City’s MIS group is interested in incorporating conservation easements in the data that is tracked. He said that of the 300 OS parcels, some will be strategically important and that some are in close proximity to where commissioners live, creating a mechanism to report on them.

The commissioners talked about the benefits of attending a training session hosted by the University of Connecticut’s Land Use Academy and requesting funds for the tuition. **Mr. Poutray** suggested using publications provided by this resource as a basis for the mission statement, noting that the mission statement should be able to guide brand new commissioners in the future and define the mechanics of the commission.

OPEN SPACE (OS) INVENTORY/STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

This issue was discussed in the context of the previous heading.

New Business

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Using as a springboard the recent application of Grillo Recycling, which deals with the Beaverbrook area, and which came before the Inland Wetlands Agency (IWA), **Mr. Poutray** opened a discussion about public hearings and public comment. He outlined details of the Grillo proposal that came before the IWA commission. The issue was considered relevant to the Conservation Commission in addition to the IWA because although Grillo has tried to make the project environmentally appealing, it is situated next to a large open space parcel in which the City has a conservation easement. He noted that IWA staff can only comment on how project will affect wetlands.

Mr. Poutray and **Mr. Johnson** discussed aspects of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and how city commissions are bound by them. They noted that the IWA is governed by state statute as well as FOIA and this dictates how they proceed with applications, specifically that scientific information must guide all their decisions. They also noted that State Statute and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) constrains commissioners' actions, including defining what constitutes a meeting. They said such meetings must be structured and transparent, that public comment is invited at a public commission meeting, but that commissioners can't accept information from the public unless it's in the context of such a meeting. They anticipate that the Grillo application will come to the Conservation Commission for comment. They stressed that it's important to understand how to interact with the process to maintain MCC objectivity and credibility. They used the analogy of a courtroom and noted that the restraints and responsibilities are reminiscent of those imposed on a jury—juries can only use what's presented in a court to make a decision. They said that it would be important for Conservation Commissioners to attend the next FOI information session run by the City.

Mr. Johnson discussed history of and specifics about the Beaver Brook property, referencing the phragmites fire that destroyed the boardwalk there and the obligations for its repair or replacement. At the end of the discussion, **Mr. Loiselle** asked **Mr. Johnson** to review Key Hyundai plans, which he did.

The meeting concluded with **Mr. Johnson** asking if members of the commission would be willing to start "stewardship monitoring" of open space near their homes. **Mr. Poutray** suggested that maps be reviewed at the next meeting and commissioners volunteer to monitor specific open space sites on an ongoing basis to assess condition and issues that need attention.

Adjournment was at 7:25.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Greene, Recording Secretary