

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Special Meeting of 16 January 2019
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
(draft) MINUTES

Members present: Quentin Kessel, Erin King, Scott Lehmann, Chadwick Rittenhouse (Alt.), Julia Rogers (Alt.), Michael Soares, John Silander. *Members absent:* Mary Harper. *Others present:* Jennifer Kaufman (Wetlands Agent), Linda Painter (Town Planner).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at approximately 7:00p by Chair Michael Soares. In the absence of one member and a replacement for Neil Facchinetti, Alternates Rittenhouse & Rogers were entitled to vote at this meeting – a Special Meeting because 2019 meeting dates were set at the 19 December 2018 meeting, affording less than 30 days notice.

2. The **draft minutes** of the meeting of 17 October 2018 were approved as written. The **draft minutes** of the meeting of 19 December 2018, were approved after amending the second sentence of item 2 to read: “The draft notes for the meeting of November 14, 2018, which lacked a quorum, were reviewed and deemed accurate.” This change was made after Lehmann wondered why the fact that a meeting lacks a quorum should excuse the Commission from assessing the accuracy of the Secretary’s record of it, whether characterized as “minutes” or “notes.”

3. UConn Northwest Science Quad EIE. {On account of a business connection between his employer and Fuss & O’Neill, which authored the EIE, Soares recused himself from this portion of the meeting and left the room.} UConn proposes to construct a research center (Science-1) and a supplementary utility plant (SUP) on a 22-acre site along King Road that is now largely occupied by parking lots (Lot 9, X-Lot, L-lot).

- These lots now have room for about 900 cars; new on-site lots would accommodate 180 cars. To cover the difference, UConn plans to construct a new parking lot for 700 cars on Discovery Drive. Linda Painter indicated that the Town has concerns about the impact of this rearrangement on traffic flows and residential property adjacent to campus.
- According to the EIE, the project could involve loss of about 2500 ft² of wetland (p.4-1): a small isolated wetland (c.2000 ft²) at the SE corner of Science-1, and about 500 ft² of wetland where a planned pedestrian path (the North Woodland Corridor) ends at the junction of King & N. Eagleville Rds. These wetlands are shown indistinctly on the map constituting Fig. 3.2. The loss is variously described as “potential” (p.ES-4) and “unavoidable” (p.4-1). It was not clear to the Commission why wetland loss could not be reduced or even eliminated by slightly moving Science-1 and the pedestrian path.
- Should the project in the end adversely impact wetlands, mitigation would be proposed. The Commission agreed that mitigation would most appropriately either (1) replace the isolated wetland with a functional one on the site, or (2) restore the large altered wetland on the western edge of the site.
- The EIE estimates (pp.3-10&11) the project will result in 8.81 acres of impervious cover (IC) – roofs, roads, sidewalks, etc. – an increase of 0.87 acre over the current IC of the site. Nonetheless, the EIE claims that runoff volume and peak flows should be reduced by 2-4% by features such as “bioswales, bio-retention areas, infiltration chambers, and permeable paving.” However, the EIE notes (p.3-45) that “the existing undersized 24” storm drainage line on the north corner of the site” will be “relocated ... and upsized ...

to increase capacity.” Storm-water in this enlarged line and runoff from the site will be combined and directed into the wetland west of the site. It is not clear whether this wetland will be receiving more runoff than it currently does and, if so, what consequences that might have.

- The Commission is pleased that the project calls for bio-filtration and installation of hydrodynamic separators (p.3-45), which should improve the quality of runoff. UConn’s inattention to storm-water management problems during the UConn 2000 construction boom led to sedimentation and pollution in Eagleville Brook. In view of that history, best storm-water management practices during and after construction should be the *minimum* expected of this project.

4. Eastern Gateways Study. Painter reviewed those recommendations of this transportation study that concern Mansfield. Gone is the extension of Discovery Drive through wetlands to Route 195, an idea floated early in the study process – which, however, lingers as a “strategy to consider” for “arterial traffic control” in the recommendations of the Special Event Management Task Force (p.100). The study is only tangentially related to the Commission’s charge. Comments were limited to (1) general support of its promotion of multi-modal transportation to reduce pollution and (2) hope that any improvement of the intersection of Rtes. 32 and 44 would spare the giant oak at the southwest corner.

5. Zoning regulations update. Painter reported on developments concerning planned business zones and multi-unit housing.

- The PZC has approved J.E. Shepard Company’s application to move a portion of the Brown property into the Planned Business zone at Four-Corners (PB-3).
- The definition of “group dwelling” has been revised to read: “residential occupancy of a dwelling by four (4) or more unrelated persons where each individual or pair of individuals has the exclusive right of occupancy of a bedroom.”
- The PZC has not acted on Shepard’s application to permit group dwellings in the PB-3 zone. UConn opposes the application, citing 25-30% vacancy in its dorms. The PZC now appears inclined to limit group dwellings to zones PB-4 (Planned Business zone on King Hill Rd) and I (Institutional zone).

6. Jim Hutton (UConn Environmental Health & Safety) could not attend due to illness, but he is interested in sitting in on the Commission’s meetings. Kaufman suggested that the Chair let him know in advance of any questions the Commission has regarding UConn.

7. Conservation easement monitoring. King has created a Google Form on which monitoring data could be entered. Rather than reinventing the wheel here, Kaufman suggested identifying a land trust with a good monitoring program and using it as a model. Silander has material on the procedures of a Michigan land trust that might be helpful. Kaufman suggested that a subcommittee consisting perhaps of King, Rogers, & Silander work on this. Soares will coordinate the effort by e-mail.

8. Reports from Commission members

- Lehmann observed that if Atty. Janet Brooks is correct about the Town’s having no legal right to inspect wetlands on private property without the owner’s permission (*The Habitat*, Fall 2017), it is false that a conservation easement adds nothing to wetlands protection, contrary to what is alleged in the minutes of the 19 December 2019 meeting (New Business, 2nd item).
- King reported ongoing winter census work for a new edition of the Connecticut Bird

Atlas.

- Soares noted that meetings of the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetland Commissions include well-done presentations and workshops that members of the Commission might find valuable. Kaufman added that money is available to cover registration.

9. Wetland Agent's report.

- A notice of wetlands violation has been issued to the owner of a parcel on Cider Mill Brook. A culvert in disrepair is permitting sediment to wash into the brook, which is also encumbered by tires and bulky waste.
- UConn has submitted its annual report on monitoring groundwater at the Agronomy Farm for pesticides and herbicides.
- Algonquin Gas Transmission, LLC, will be doing corrosion control work on its pipeline through Mansfield; the Town has no jurisdiction.

10. Adjourned at 9:20p. Next regular meeting: 7:00p, Wednesday, 20 February 2019.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 20 January 2019