

Town of Stonington Conservation Commission
Minutes of a Regular Meeting held on September 23, 2019
Police Station Community Meeting Room, 173 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT

1. Call to order - Chairman Stuart Cole called the meeting to order at 7:02PM. Members present were Ben Baldwin, Sheila Lyons, and Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan. Member Jim Friedlander was absent. Members of the public were present.

2. Review of Town developments and Proposals

- a. PZ1923ZC 1189 Pequot Trail, LLC (R. Valenti)** – *Master Plan Zone Change application from the existing GBR-130 zone to the Agricultural Heritage District (AHD) zone. The proposed master plan seeks to preserve the farm and buildings and to stimulate economic activity by creating a campus for agriculture, livestock, equestrian activities, education, and events. The subject site, the former Dean's Mill Farm, is located at 1189 Pequot Trail, Stonington, CT. Assessor's Map 135 Block 2 Lot 1. Zone GBR-130. Copies of the application (PZ1923 Application.pdf, PZ1923ZC_site plan_update.pdf, and PZ1923ZC 9-16-19 update.pdf) had been distributed by Town Planner Keith Brynes by email. Rob Valenti described the 78-acre property: a 5-BR residence a, a second house occupied by the farm manager, outbuildings, carriage house, corn crib, new indoor equestrian arena and 17-stall barn. It was described as a horse farm with 20 acres of cleared fields and potential for a bed & breakfast, and as an event and wedding venue for up to 250 guests. The Deans Mill Farm, a/k/a Jones Farm or Dragonfly Equestrian Center, has long been farmed and under the PA 490 reduced assessment program, per Mr. Valenti. Stuart Cole read the application. Ben Baldwin read part of the AHD regulation. Questions were asked whether the property meets the requirement that the farm has "been used continually for agricultural purposes for at least 25 years" and whether the application meets the Master Plan requirement. The site plan does not show all the abutting land of the owner, shows only some of the topography and shows none of the wetlands. Mr. Valenti said he had considered an extension of a road through the property and 12 & 13 Jacobs Way in order to allow a subdivision of house lots and some large estate-sized lots. MOTION: The Conservation Commission is in agreement with the zone change from GBR-130 to AHD (Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan, Sheila Lyons). Passed unanimously.*
- b. Any pending applications and new preliminary proposals.** None.

6. Review of draft minutes – Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan had not been present on 7/22/2019 and therefore those minutes were not approved. Sheila Lyons requested an amendment noting why she abstained in a vote. The minutes of 7/22/2019 will be voted on at the next meeting.

5. New Business – It was noted that Jim Kading had not renewed membership upon the end of his term and that Michael Schefers had resigned. Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan said she would ask an acquaintance to join the Commission and then departed the meeting at 7:58 pm.

3. Old Business

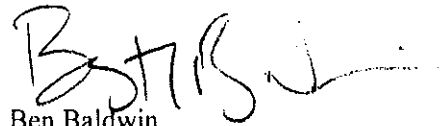
- c. Discussion of open space and conservation easement transfers for ongoing and past subdivisions.** Ben Baldwin said that about half of the Perkins Farm is open space, although it contains improvements such as roads and a dam, but the Commission needs to understand what it has oversight over at these properties for future monitoring. It is not clear how they are to be managed. Stuart Cole will speak with Town Planner Keith Brynes and request an inspection of the properties.
- d. Discussion of 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development.** Ben Baldwin said a review of the Conservation Commission's action items is necessary, but some are complete, including the list of committed open space that he is maintaining. Fran Hoffman, the Plan of Conservation and Development Implementation Committee (POCDIC) liaison to the CC, suggested getting assistance from staff or an intern to move forward with the Conservation Commission's tasks. She suggested rereading Chapters 3, 5 and 6. The 2015 POCD is at http://www.stonington-ct.gov/sites/stoningtonct/files/file/file/2015_pocd_final_version.pdf.
- e. Discussion of updates to 2007 Open Space Plan.** Ben Baldwin suggested reviewing how the Open Space Plan will be updated as we had proposed combining it with the Natural Resource Inventory. The 2007 Plan is at http://www.stonington-ct.gov/sites/stoningtonct/files/file/file/open_space_plan.pdf. The addition of an open space data layer within the Town's online GIS was suggested, using the list of committed open space, as has been done in Lyme. See <https://lymect.mapgeo.io>.

5. New Business.

- a. Schedule for 2020 same as current year: 4th Monday except May 18th and no December meeting.
- b. Correspondence includes an application from CT DEEP for Barn Island WMA water management enhancements to including replacement of culverts, apparently to enhance flow. Ducks Unlimited is to aid. Stuart Cole to review.
- c. Sheila Lyons brought up several issues:
 - “Water-quality monitors say swimming in Pawcatuck River, Little Narragansett Bay not advisable,” The Sun 8/13/2019 https://www.thewesterlysun.com/news/westerly/water-quality-monitors-say-swimming-in-pawcatuck-river-little-narragansett/article_0a66d95a-bd35-11e9-9be9-4faf6700290f.html. While water quality is poor for swimming, members wondered whether it was worse now than in the recent past.
 - The Stillmanville Woolen Mill collapse and clean up. Ben Baldwin mentioned the Thread Mill outbuilding collapse and noted the Town’s loss of historic resources by neglect.
 - The Civilian Conservation Corps and its history at Pachaug State Forest. <https://www.theday.com/article/20190921/NWS01/190929871>
 - The application to the CT Siting Council for a solar farm east of Taugwonk Road which would use 16.5 acres of farmland. <https://www.theday.com/article/20190918/NWS01/190919374> & bit.ly/GSSNsolar.
 - Other items discussed included Aquarion Water valves in the street, EEE, horseshoe crabs, forest preservation for water quality, and climate change.

7. **Adjournment** – Sheila Lyons made a motion to adjourn at 9:11 pm. Passed unanimously.

Minutes submitted by



Ben Baldwin
Secretary, Town of Stonington Conservation Commission

Approved at a regular meeting on
10/28/2019