

MINUTES
ENFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Special MEETING in the Scitico Room
820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT 06082
Tuesday, June 13, 2023-7:00PM

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2023 JUN 20 PM 2:01

Shirley M Bailey

1. Call to Order

Chairman William Cote called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Chairman William Cote, Commissioners Karen LaPlante, Kathleen Vose, Gretchen Pfeifer-Hall, Phil Kober, Timothy McGuire, Nancy Wyzga, and Michael Dynia.

Also present: Ms. Whitten, Director of Planning and Ms. Driver, Assistant Planner, and Sandie Barone, Recording Secretary.

3. Approval of Minutes:

a) May 9, 2023

Commissioner Dynia made a motion to approve the minutes for May 9, 2023, seconded by Commissioner LaPlante.

Discussion: Commissioner LaPlante stated that she read a couple of areas that did not make sense. The bottom of the first page: motion read 5-0-1. The person that abstained from the vote should be noted. **Commissioner Kober abstained from the vote.**

On the second page, Commissioner LaPlante stated that the following sentences did not make sense.

"He did get some information from the members of the Scantic River Watershed Association about Kirsten and the background on how long she has been doing the testing on the Scantic River and to get some more information on what she is doing in Somers."

"He put out the nomination together and submitted it Monday."

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall suggested revising the sentences to; **The purpose for gathering this information was to submit Kirsten Martin for the award, The Aquarion Community Environmental award.**

"Ms. Driver indicated that they need to request the money back by submitting a letter to the Town Manager." Should read **submitting**.

Bottom of the last page; "Ms. Driver referenced the State website, the aquafer protection area guide to best management practices for golf courses, athletic fields, etc. and specifically mentions turf management." Should read **aquifer**.

Commissioner Kober made a motion to approve the minutes from May 9, 2023, as amended, seconded by Commissioner Dynia.

Motion passed by 5-0-2 with Commissioner McGuire and Wyzga abstaining.

4. Public Communication:

Chair Cote addressed the audience, he explained that each person from the public that wishes to speak will have 3 minutes.

Ms. Driver reiterated the rule of public communications is they may speak just not on items on the agenda. They may address concerns, but no back-and-forth discussion.

Ms. Whitten stated that it is up to the Chair and the board to welcome public participation on a discussion topic on the agenda.

Chair Cote and the rest of the Commissioners agreed to allow the public to speak under Public Communication.

Lori Longhi 1427 Enfield Street- stated that she wanted to talk about Open Space in general. She stated Open Space was set up to fill the void of properties not being farmed or not good for farmland. She said it does not make sense for amounts not less than 25 acres. If you have 25 acres you could always go into forest land. The smaller parcels have nowhere to go. She said after reviewing the proposal from the Agricultural Commission on 4 acres, she believes it should be changed to 3 acres. She stated after watching several meetings that she does not feel that people understand PA490. She discussed the funding of open space, penalties, benefits and generating revenue. Farms and open space are not costing the Town services money.

Niki Price 1324 Enfield Street- stated that she is in favor of the 490 Open Space Ordinance, which she believes should not be limited to large parcels of land. Open Space helps communities protect their environment, improve quality of life, and preserve elements of local heritage and culture.

Anne Marie Galdenzi 1330 Enfield Street- stated to conserve Open Space is extremely important for the town and not just for people with farms but for people who enjoy the forest areas.

Mike Ludwick 16 Silver Lane- stated that he believes they are being conservative with 4 acres, he would like them to be more aggressive. It's important to have a viable supply of local food because it could have a huge impact. As far as the Conservation Commission is concerned, he would like to know if they can investigate farms that are food producing. For those that are food producing, they can get a bigger tax break.

Donna Dubinowski 23 Betty Road- stated that it is extremely important that we preserve open space, they should start at less than 4 acres. If there are no farms, no food and people need food.

Lori Longhi 1427 Enfield Street- stated that she was concerned about the size of the acres so she read into the town of Tolland. She read a verbiage from Tolland's Open Space. She noticed the write up on 490 from this board, that it said the Assessor shall use state recommended land values for all Open Space land, which she stated is not true. The State does not designate the value of the Open Space, it's the Town.

Maureen Mullen 1625 King Street- stated she is in favor of preserving Open Space not just for producing food but for clean air and for the animals. Once we lose this space we cannot go back.

Niki Price 1324 Enfield Street- she wanted to point out that lack of planning for conservation can lead to fragmentation of conserved lands.

5. Correspondence: Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall discussed an article that she read in the Journal Inquirer on tax assessment process in Enfield. The article discusses the ordinance that the Conservation Commission is recommending and it says that the ordinance needs to be adopted prior to October 1, 2023, grand list.

6. Reports of Officers, Committees, and Staff:

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall and Kober stated that there have been no meetings for Economic Development. Commissioner LaPlante brought up 2 Chapel Street. Chair Cote said he wrote a letter on 2 Chapel Street and sent it to the Town Manager, they requested that the proceeds from 2 Chapel Street be put back into the Open Space fund.

Commissioner LaPlante asked staff if they have any additional information on the funds of 2 Chapel Street.

Commissioner Wyzga stated that she did not have the copies of the natural resources with her.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that she had reviewed a memo from 2013 on 2 Chapel Street and generated a letter from the Conservation Commission to the Town Manager.

Chair Cote stated he would take her letter and submit it to the Town Manager.

Ms. Driver read a portion of the minutes that discusses the Chair submitting the letter on 2 Chapel Street.

Commissioner LaPlante read a portion of the minutes that a subcommittee was suggested to do more research on 2 Chapel Street.

Chair Cote asked Georgie how they were doing with the list or map of Open Space. Ms. Driver indicated that she does not have access to it. At today's staff meeting they discussed GIS and from the new consultant there hasn't been any progress.

Commissioner Dynia discussed the Scantic River Watershed meeting he attended in East Windsor at Melrose School. It's a one room schoolhouse that they have preserved. Albert Grant, who is on the committee, is also in charge of the school. They discussed the Full Moon paddle which will probably be in August.

7. Unfinished Business:

a.) List of Natural Resources-Chair Cote stated Commissioner Wyzga and himself have been working on the list of natural resources and will have a presentation for the Commission at the next meeting.

b.) Open Space- discussed under Item 6.

8. New Business:

a.) Informal Discussion: 100 Bright Meadow Blvd. Ms. Driver stated that they will not be presenting as they are in the design phase and do not have all the information for the presentation. Ms. Whitten stated that the Commission will have an opportunity to make a comment when an application is submitted. Ms. Driver stated that she gave the Commission a copy of the minutes from the Inland Wetlands Watercourse Agency meeting from June 6, 2023, where there was an informal discussion about mitigation strategies.

b.) PA 490 Open Space Ordinance: Ms. Whitten was present at the meeting to discuss the ordinance with the Commission. A zoning map with handed out so the Commissioners could review the

areas of Open Space. Chair Cote stated that they want the whole Town to be considered Open Space, not just under residential, industrial, business, or commercial.

Commissioner LaPlante stated that there are 404 parcels less than 5 acres and 25 parcels between 3 and 5 acres.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall asked if the parcels were developed. Commissioner LaPlante stated they are parcels with less than \$10,000 in building value. She stated that she has 6 parcels that got kicked out of open space with re-evaluation. Ms. Whitten stated that either they did not re-register or they are no longer qualified for Open Space.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall discussed how they came up with the 4 acres by looking at other towns with similarities and comparing them with Enfield. She stated that it would make sense to go with the 3 acres. She addressed the comment from Planning and Zoning about losing tax money with Open Space, however the statistics indicate that Open Space uses the least amount of tax dollars. Communities that have Open Space are more desirable for people to move to and therefore property values increase.

Ms. Whitten stated that she believes the concern was that they want the Assessor to understand this program and he should be involved before it goes to the Town Council.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that the Assessor is the one who brought it to the attention of the Commission and since then the Commissioners have been working on this ordinance.

Ms. Driver suggested that the Commissioners invite the Assessor to the meeting in July.

Chair Cote stated one concern is verifying what the applicant is submitting. In such a case the Assessor should be involved.

Commissioner Kober indicated that they should probably get focused on drafting up the verbiage for the actual ordinance and then invite people such as the Assessor and have staff look at it and tweak it a little.

Town Manager Ellen Zoppo-Sassu joined the meeting at 8PM. Town Manager Zoppo-Sassu discussed where they are with the Open Space draft ordinance. It was referred to the Planning and Zoning Commission last year. It came back from the Planning and Zoning Commission at the adoption of the Plan of Conservation and Development. The POCD asked to reference Open Space not farm or forestry but Open Space which they did. The Council said anywhere can be considered Open Space. Within leadership they referred to the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association pages 18 and 19 where it talks about the evaluation of Open Space, how to adopt the PA490 Open Space classification and who is eligible and Open Space land value assessment. She stated that they are in a delicate position as they want to preserve Open Space for the future but also pay some bills, how can they balance that. She stated that when she designed the resolution, she wanted to fast track this and she thought it was appropriate to send it back to the Conservation Commission to start creating the parameters. Is 4 or 5 acres, is it residential only, and are there any exemptions. The Town Council can review it and absorb, act on, or endorse, alter, or adopt. The timeline is October 1, 2023, and the Town Council would like to see this expedited. The proposal that came to the Town Council along with sample ordinances is something they can work with, revise, and put into a resolution format and send to the Town Council for their immediate attention. There are some pieces of the draft that we should discuss, such as the evaluation. She discussed Hazardville Water and how they own several acres and should they be exempt based on the parameters designed?

Chair Cote stated as a group they do not want to exclude Open Space within Commercial Zones they would like to encompass the whole town.

Ms. Whitten said that since they drafted up the ordinance that they tweak the acres, if there are any exemptions.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall asked the Town Manager to explain the Water Company.

The Town Manager stated that there is case law in other communities that they are tax paying entities and exemptions are granted in other areas where that can be taken into consideration and have some benefits in terms of evaluation. This is just an example to look at.

Commissioner LaPlante asked to have a joint meeting with whoever needs to give input on the ordinance so they can get this done.

Ms. Driver suggested that the Commission tweak the ordinance now and come up with questions to get this expedited and the staff can forward those questions to the Assessor and whoever else needs to be involved in preparation for the July meeting.

The Town Manager suggested that after their discussion from this evening's meeting that they submit to staff so it may be added to the agenda for June 19, 2023.

Commissioner Dynia made a motion to reduce the acres from 4 to 3 on the ordinance draft, seconded by Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall.

Motion passed unanimously.

9. Next Meeting Date: June 11, 2023

10. Adjournment:

Commissioner Kober made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner McGuire.

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

Prepared by: Recording Secretary, Sandie Barone