

Beacon Falls Conservation Commission
10 Maple Ave.
Beacon Falls, CT 06403



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2014
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.

Commissioners present: Mike Bouchard, Michael Opuszynski, Jeff Kean

Commissioner absent: Vice Chairman Noralie D'Amico, Secretary Tanya Gutierro, Chris Wilemski

Others present: Vice Chair Joe Fitzpatrick of P&Z, Selectman Peter Betkoski

Chairman D. Betkoski stressed the importance that members use her work email address and to email the clerk if they cannot attend a meeting so that we get the word quickly.

Motion to rearrange the agenda order to accommodate guest speaker Joe Fitzpatrick: Bouchard/Opuszynski; all aye.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Betkoski introduced Joe Fitzpatrick, Vice Chair of P&Z to address the Conservation Commission's questions pertaining to P&Z's current guidelines for accepting open space or a fee from developers. He also presented a proposal to improve vehicle access to the industrial park.

Joe Fitzpatrick explained the P&Z process where a developer comes to them with a development plan for Beacon Falls. By state statute, 10% of that parcel would get deeded and turned over to the town.

J. Fitzpatrick will contact the town attorney requesting a written explanation of the land donation process, but it would be up to the Board of Selectmen to determine which town board or commission would be the steward of that property.

Discussion:

M. Bouchard asked how any donated land could be more beneficial for town and not useless land as open space.

J. Fitzpatrick commented it would be up to P&Z to turn down potentially useless land made as a donation. During the Public Hearing process members of the Conservation Commission could voice concerns and problems could be addressed at this point.

D. Betkoski questioned that the first instance when the Conservation Commission got involved should be at a public hearing.

M. Opuszynski noted that the Board of Selectmen should involve the Conservation Commission when determining who will be stewards of donated land.

J. Kean agreed that the Conservation Commission should be involved in any development projects involving potential donated land.

J. Fitzpatrick stressed the importance of the Conservation Commission and Planning & Zoning Board to share information including meeting minutes.

D. Betkoski noted that the open space ordinance lacks procedure for accepting donated land or fees from a developer. She commented that each board should interface with the developer.

M. Opuszynski asked if the intention of Land Use Committee was to have oversight of Developers.

D. Betkoski commented that it would be the Board of Selectmen's decision which committee would be the steward of any new property donated to the town.

J. Fitzpatrick commented that he assumed any fees collected in lieu of donated property from a developer would go into the town's general fund.

D. Betkoski reiterated the importance of having clear guidelines in place for this process.

J. Fitzpatrick will contact the town attorney for advice on the process.

D. Betkoski noted she had already received emails from Attorney Byrne raising these questions.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will forward emails from Attorney Byrne regarding open space donations from developers to J. Fitzpatrick and Conservation Commission members to avoid any duplication of legal information already received.

D. Betkoski noted that the Plan of Conservation and Development is the town's strategic Plan and the Conservation Commission made a request in 2008 for P&Z to have any donated open space include marked boundaries.

D. Betkoski suggested using a Land Use Committee meeting to have the different boards meet and discuss any development project before it goes to a Public Hearing

J. Fitzpatrick shared the IWWC Application Process, a flow chart, used for guidance.

D. Betkoski noted that the Conservation Commission has the legal right to turn down a proposed property donation from a developer.

M. Opuszynski commented that the Conservation Commission should develop a solid open space plan, which then could be presented to P&Z and I&W so they are aware of the Conservation Commission's overall plan for the town.

J. Fitzpatrick suggested contacting Rich Minnick for background information and history of lands donated to Beacon Falls.

D. Betkoski noted that the Conservation Commission has reached out to neighboring towns to ask what they do in these situations.

J. Fitzpatrick presented a proposal to improve vehicle access to the industrial park including aerial maps of proposed changes to route 8 ramps giving better access to the industrial park which would alleviate the truck traffic from the downtown area.

This plan would give better access to the industrial park and better walking paths to the recreational fields from downtown.

Discussion:

D. Betkoski asked what the goal is for the industrial park, other than creating better traffic flow through town and what the current capacity is at the current industrial park.

J. Fitzpatrick explained that O&G sent a letter when there was a public hearing on the Plan of Conservation and Development voicing their concerns that their Beacon Falls property was hard to sell because of limited vehicle access.

J. Fitzpatrick has suggested a grass roots effort to get this plan moving, including asking for state legislators and local support, and asking local businesses to support it. He said the First Selectman supported this plan.

D. Betkoski thanked J. Fitzpatrick for sharing this transportation plan with the Conservation Commission and he will provide the members with copies of these maps.

M. Opuszynski asked what the timeline was for this plan.

J. Fitzpatrick commented that his would be a 10-year project. It might be easier to sell it as a regional plan by also including access to the Waterbury-Oxford airport. Increasing access to and growth of the industrial park could increase businesses in town and enlarge the tax base for the town and provide potential employment opportunities. He also noted that this plan wouldn't impact the small town feel of the downtown area.

J. Kean pointed out that traffic could be rerouted during construction and avoid any road closures.

J. Fitzpatrick commented that he expects to present this plan to other town boards and commissions over the next 2 months.

3. Approval of Minutes – December 2, 2013 - tabled

The December 2, 2013 meeting minutes could not be approved as there was not a quorum present of members who were at this meeting.

4. Correspondence

- CC of December 15 memo from Rich Minnick to the Board of Selectmen re his interest in continuing to serve as BF Land Use-Open Space Steward and as one of the reps to the Naugatuck Greenway Trail Committee
- Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society appeal for money
- information from CTNOFA about NE regional course on organic land care in Norwich, which had taken place in December
- Christmas card from Chatfield Farms
- budget status report as of 12/24/13
- December 16 memo from First Selectman requesting proposed budgets for FY 2014-15 and 5-year budget projections due by January 10

5. Membership Update

- Conservation Commission Ordinance – proposed staggered terms

D. Betkoski stated that she notified the Board of Selectmen of concerns about all members having the same term end date. A draft proposal will be worked on at next month's meeting.

- CACIWC Annual Conference report – held November 16 - tabled
- Dedicated email account for Chair

D. Betkoski would like to establish a separate email account for past communications and the commission's email history available to pass on to the next chairman. On hold pending new town webmaster and getting a town email account for the chairman.

6. 2014 Goals –

Chairman D. Betkoski distributed a draft copy of Conservation Goals for 2014 to members. She noted the need for the goals to be better defined and associated with a timeframe.

M. Opuszynski commented that once an open space plan is in place and final, to share it with the other boards, which would justify the land acquisition fund request.

7. Budget Update

- 2013 – 2014: \$1,500 balance in operating budget; \$928 left in clerical fee budget line.

D. Betkoski suggested making a similar budget request for 2014-2015 and that the current land acquisition fund balance of \$500 needs to be moved into an interest bearing account by the end of the fiscal year.

- 2014 – 2015: discussion and review of draft 2014 goals for making budget request estimates:

\$25,000 for land acquisition fund

\$1,298 keeping clerical budget line item the same

\$500 for marketing materials for outreach events throughout the year

\$300 for supplies such as gloves and trash bags for use in Invasive plant pulls

\$500 for membership dues to groups and subscriptions

\$700 (\$100 per member) for education (conferences and classes)

\$2,000 tentative budget of non-salary budget plus clerical line and land acquisition fund

ACTION: D. Betkoski will submit itemized budget request and email it to Conservation Commission members.

8. Land Use Committee no activity/meetings

9. Open Space Management

- Open Space Preservation Fund Update
- Open Space Inventory

10. Payment of Invoices

- Clerical invoice

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$83.75 for the December 2, 2013 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Opuszynski/Kean; all aye.

J. Kean departed at 8:05.

11. Announcements/Adjournment

M. Opuszynski said he would like to make a shortened presentation to the commission on Dams, Vernal Pools and Rain Gardens that he learned from the CACIWC Conference.

He also commented that he and his family took a walk through Lantern Ridge and it looks like it is being used. He noted there was less trash in the woods and appears to be maintained and that local Girl Scouts have volunteered to do a cleanup once a month at Lantern Ridge.

M. Opuszynski shared that his brother, a trail coordinator for the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, had some recommendations for Lantern Ridge signs: to put 1 inch offsets between the signs and the trees for the tree growth, and put American Flag stickers on them which would discourage any vandalism.

He also commented that his brother developed a video for preventing the spread of invasive species in waterways and requested C. Wilemski post the link <http://www.northernforestcanoetrail.org/PlanaTrip-3/Aquatic-Invasives-70> to the Conservation Commission website.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, February 3, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting was concluded at 8:17 PM by mutual agreement.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

CC: Conservation Commission members
Board of Selectmen
Planning & Zoning Commission
Inland Wetlands Commission
Park & Rec Commission