Call to Order

Present: Tom Harbinson, Chairman
        Bill Dyer, Vice-Chairman
        Jim Tate, Commissioner
        Joe Welsh, Commissioner
        Ed McCreery, Commissioner
        Jim Goodman, Commissioner
        Sheryl Dutkanicz, Commissioner

Also Present: Teresa Gallagher, Conservation Agent
              Marianne Chaya, Clerk
A. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance
Chairman Harbinson called the meeting of the Conservation Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Public Portion
Chairman Harbinson stated that since there were so many members of the public here to address the Commission that this item would be moved up on the agenda.

The Chairman requested the following correspondence to be inserted into the record:
Expressed opposition site entry of the Community Garden proposed at the former Klapik property

Greetings:

My name is Royce York and I live at 10 Longview Road, Shelton, Connecticut. I am requesting that my discontent regarding the community garden access site of Longview Road be formally read into the next minutes of the BOA. Our neighborhood does realize that the sight location and entry point will be made by the Mayor, but feel that our BOA should have some ability to influence decisions that will directly affect us. There are several reasons why I oppose this entrance. They are as follows:

1) Effects of neighborhood safety: The proposed site entry, located on a cul-de-sac, will be intrusive and compromise the safety of the neighborhood. Within 50 feet from the proposed entrance live 4 young children that are unaccustomed to traffic that will become yet another burden to the neighborhood. The plot designated for the garden has at least two other entry points that will not affect anyone’s privacy and should be the primary entry points. They are either through the Long Hill School or through the open space off Long Hill Avenue.

2) Effect of increased traffic: The proposed site entry of Longview Road is not conducive to the increased traffic. A total of 60 plots have been designated. Conservatively, each person leasing a plot will require 5 visits per week to maintain their garden. Each trip represents a ride in and out through the cul-de-sac for a total of 10 times per week. This equates to 600 additional trips per week during gardening season on a road that is approximately the length of a football field. This is a drastic increase in traffic and affects not only Longview Road, but the beginning portion of Lauralwood Drive. The total number of homes affected by this is 20. The intrusion will increase vandalism and crime into the neighborhood. There is no one in the immediate community area that wants an additional plot for gardening. Therefore, the plot lesasers will be from outside our
immediate neighborhood. True, open space is to be enjoyed by everyone from the town, but not at the expense or quality of life of an established neighborhood. More people with no vested interest in the neighborhood, more opportunity for theft, assaults, and vandalism of property. Disruptive behavior is another key issue this traffic will bring that we may have to deal with. Theft from one garden to another is a common problem sited by community gardeners and other towns that have built them

3) **Effect upon rural neighborhood character:** The rural character and peaceful surroundings of the neighborhood will be compromised. The noise of the traffic, people, and equipment used to garden will significantly increase as prevailing winds come from the north of our road. Everyone who lives on Longview Road will confirm this. If the proposal for entry is established on Longview Road, trash from the increased traffic and waste will migrate onto our road. We have had an impeccable history of cleanliness due to its homeowners keeping it neat and clean.

4) **Effect upon home value:** Home values will be adversely affected when the character of the neighborhood is changed for the worse. Realtor estimates are an immediate $10,000 loss in property value. Given the current state of the economy we hope that you understand this is too great a loss for 20 or more homeowners to bear.

**Other concerns to create a successful community garden:**

Apparently, the project has quickly digressed where real immediate needs for a successful garden will not be addressed most likely due to cheapening the cost and fast-tracking a make-believe “Shovel Ready” project. It is obvious that this project is going to require grant money because this town is too cheap to pick up the tab itself. So, am I wrong to suspect that the fast tracking has something to do with money at the expense of a well thought out plan? It has been proposed by Teresa that barrels of water will be used for the purpose of watering gardens. This is ludicrous and if the neighborhood residents had been embraced as partners, they would have made it clear that this is just not an option for a significantly sloped, dry, windy area for growing crops. She also makes comment that water hookups will be an option in the future. Under the current situation with the economy and comments recently made by the Mayor about budgetary cut-backs, I doubt there will be much money available for water hookups for a longtime to come. Winds and run-off are going to have serious drying effects on the soil. How is water to be provided and how frequently will these “barrels” require refilling, and how many barrels are to be placed on the site, and who will be responsible for paying the water bill? The other concern I have is who is going to furnish the water and at what price to the town? The water bill for residence alone averages $350-$400/year. With 60 plots, and a need for continual watering, I imagine that the $1200 received by the town for plot leasing will quickly be depleted.
Already, the project has expanded to 60 plots, water hookup has been reduced to barrels, and immediate neighbors concerns are being ignored by the mayor and Conservation Agent Teresa Gallagher. This does not sound like a good start to a successful community garden.

In closing, please consider the other alternate locations to the garden and if the location is to remain at the Klapik site, at the least, please consider our request to change the Longview Road access. If an acceptable entrance cannot be established please consider an alternative site such as near the newly proposed dog park, where there is good public access, space, water hookup and no neighbor’s safety to jeopardize.

Royce York

From: R. York <royceyork@sbcglobal.net>
Date: Wed, Mar 3, 2010 at 2:36 PM
Subject: Community Garden
To: Mayor, John Anglace, Tom Harbinson

Dear Mayor, John and Tom,

Please have this letter made available to the CC and BOA, as well as members of the garden committee for their next meeting.

The residents of Long Hill, Laurelwood Drive, Longview Road, and beyond have clearly demonstrated their displeasure with your choice of location for the community garden. Together, and in just 2 weeks of initial communications, we include over 25 families and well over 100 residents.

How do you justify pushing through a plan that:

- has many obstacles and drawbacks sited by the public
- will hurt and change the character of the 50 year old host neighborhood
- will create a sense of insecurity for dozens of people
- create of sense of discrimination and callousness by city officials (we are already being ignored)
- create a high traffic situation on a street that is not prepared to deal with it
- benefit far less people than it will hurt

Your publicity efforts to show need reached thousands of residents through the school system. Yet you have less than 60 responses from the whole town.

Please justify to us how you can call this an establishment of need when...
opposition far outweighs and outnumbers supporters of this plan.

Randy York

Chairman Harbinson asked Agent Gallagher to first give us an update on the community garden organization. He stated that it is an ad-hoc committee from the Board of Aldermen and they have looked at a number of properties and Conservation gave them their recommendation to look closely at the Klapik open space property.

Agent Gallagher reported that the garden committee looked at two different sites. Site 1 was right off the end of Longview and Site 2 was along Long Hill Ave. After looking at both sites and weighing the pros and cons, the committee chose the Longview Rd. site as the number one preferred site with the other site as the second choice. The Long Hill Ave. site was not preferred because it is not as well-drained and it's smaller. We would have to come closer to homes and cross a gas pipeline. We also had comments from neighbors in that area who don't want it there. No matter where we put it people are going to have issues with it. I did have someone visit me from Asbury Ridge that said that there are a lot of elderly drivers in the area and there was a car accident recently with someone trying to pull out and they didn't want another driveway there. The issue of access is really from Longview Road just for this year. We don't know what would happen after that. That is really up to the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen. The garden committee doesn't have the power to build a driveway. It has to come from Engineering and the Mayor. The Mayor did suggest looking at access from Long Hill in the future.

Chairman Harbinson asked Agent Gallagher to give the history of the open space parcel.

Agent Gallagher stated that the Klapik property is two parcels totaling a little over 40 acres. It was purchased in 2002 with general funds, not open space funds. There are no deed restrictions and one of the reasons was so it could be used for recreation. The property is currently being hayed by Royal Wells.

Chairman Harbinson commented that a couple of years ago he, Commissioners Welsh and McCreery went there looking at the invasives that were creeping into the hedge rows and in light of what the Land Trust is able to accomplish on their properties with maintaining and cutting back the invasives whether that would be a candidate for similar kind of work to improve the suitability or the amount of property that can be hayed.

Commissioner Welsh stated that we applied for a grant through the State of CT but we were not given the award, nor any other town, due to the lack of funds available. Going after invasive plants not only helps enhance the parcel but also the farmers crop because they would be able to get that much closer to the fields edges.
Chairman Harbinson stated for the public’s benefit in case you are not aware, Conservation Commission is purely an advisory Commission. We do have a budget for such things as maintaining fields, plans and surveys, etc. The Planning & Zoning commission makes decisions on zoning and development issues, the Board of Aldermen makes decisions on fiscal issues. Our opinion is highly weighted as we have been in the community a long time and are knowledgeable about our open space parcels and the suitability of properties for things such as ball fields or maintaining forest or farm or agricultural land. In that regard we will open it up if anyone from the public would want to speak. We did receive some emails that some people want it read into the record. If you are here now and want to do that on your own you are welcome to but we can include them in our minutes. (See above)

Agent Gallagher mentioned that she did talk with someone who has a community garden in Killingworth that has 50 plots and we are recommending about 60 plots. I asked her what they are experiencing in usage and traffic. She said now most people don’t go there more than twice a week. She said “they were worried about parking and traffic flow initially it has not been a problem. Very few gardeners visit every day. In my experience the spring is busier, but even then the number of cars in the lot are no more than 4 to 5”.

A member of the public asked where the garden is located, at the end of cul-de-sac or in a residential community?

Agent Gallagher said she did not know. The reason I was asking about the amount of traffic they get.

Vice-Chairman Dyer stated that it should be noted that all the citizens of Shelton paid for this property. It could be a skate park, it could be a flag football field, it could be a golf course. Because people live next to open space does not mean that just they can use it and nobody else can use it or that they can prevent everybody from using it. Every taxpayer paid for this property. Every taxpayer pays for the schools but they don’t get to say what goes on in the schools. Just because people live near open space doesn’t mean they can control how it gets used. They can recommend, they can be enthusiastic supporters or give your objections.

Chairman Harbinson asked that if any member of the public wishes to address them they need to give their name for the record.

Patricia Barber, 15 Longview Rd.

Mrs. Barber said that our concern is our safety. The entrance is going to be on the cul-de-sac. I did some research and I looked at other gardens in Milford, Bridgeport, Trumbull, Ansonia, Derby, Stratford, and all those are in parks or in land that has been there for farming. They are not changing parking or putting parking at the end of a street. None of them are in a residential area. They are all in parks.

Commissioner McCreery said that he thought Milford’s garden was in a residential area. It’s off Wheelers Farm Rd.
Commissioner Tate suggested taking the parking off the cul-de-sac. People do park there now to use the open space. Would that be something better? Mrs. Barber said no.

Someone mentioned that it would be a step in the right direction but it is certainly far from addressing all the issues.

Mrs. Barber talked about traffic as it is now.

Commissioner Welsh asked if the residents liked the idea of a community garden concept to keep the farming and gardening roots of which is part of Shelton’s character?

Mrs. Barber said we’re all gardeners.

Tom Carstensen, 8 Longview Rd.

Mr. Carstensen asked for some background on the whole community garden. It seems to be fast-tracked and what I heard that there were two sites looked at but there are other properties within the town that could also be considered.

Unidentified resident:
We want to know what other research was done on the sites that were recommended by your Commission. What other research has been done on that property. On January 30th Teresa was walking the Klapik property and said this is the good spot. It’s on her blog that it’s there. Where is the comment from all the other spots? I also want to know why is the dog park not an option?

Commissioner Tate said that we would take one thing at a time.

Agent Gallagher stated that for as long as she has been working as the Conservation agent, about 4 years, ever so often people would come by or call and ask about starting up a community garden. Apparently they were doing the same thing to the Mayor. My response was always no, we don’t have one planned and then I started taking names because I was getting so many requests. We did address it in the updated open space plan that it was something we could look into in the future. It has always been on the back burner and we thought we’d have one some day. It takes work and you need the right people to come forward.

Mr. Carstensen asked about the traffic and that it seems that this all started in the last couple of months and it seems we are on a fast-track to get this done by this spring. Why? What is the motivation to get it done that quick? I embrace the farming aspects of our town.

Commissioner Tate said that it seems your key question is why that site was selected.

Chairman Harbinson answered that we are very supportive of agriculture in our community; it’s part of the fabric of our community, in areas such as White Hills or on Long Hill Ave with the Klapik and Tall farms. Of the properties the city has as open space some are forest and some are agriculture value lands such as the Klapik property. Recognizing that we have licenses with various farmers to maintain the farms, most of which are just hayed. As that happens the maintenance of the farmland requires more than just mowing it once a year. We recognized in our open space plan properties that have agricultural properties
that we want to preserve and when we recently revised the open space plan we recognized that there may be other aspects of agricultural use that we had to entertain in the future, such as a community garden. When a number of the public had been coming to Teresa and the Mayor’s office for years inquiring about Shelton having a community garden and we didn’t, we recognized we are going to eventually have to identify an appropriate city open space that could utilized as such. Earlier a comment was made about using the property where the dog park will be used as a community garden. Obviously various properties in town have various soil types. Some are rocky, some don’t drain well, so in terms of all the open space inventory not all is suitable for agriculture gardening purposes. From that we distilled down a list of potential properties that might be suitable for community gardening. Of those we felt the Klapik property was the most suitable. We looked at the Wiacek property on Meadow St, which has a significant area of meadow and fields but is also significantly wet and causes drainage issues on the baseball fields at the school. The Tall farm is currently used for lacrosse activities and might be suitable. But of all the properties in terms of size, accessibilities, drainage and soil types, we felt the Klapik property was the most suitable and that was our recommendation. Again, we are purely an advisory Commission. It is the Board of Aldermen ad-hoc committee that they created, who has to ask for Board of Aldermen for approval to use a property. They have gotten what they call an 8-24 (state statute) referral from the Planning & Zoning saying is this an appropriate activity for a particular location, and the City Engineer has also given those kind of referral letters to this committee. It’s not really fast-tracking even though it might feel that way and understandably there is a mother nature deadline to maybe want to try and plant this spring season. In that sense they are under the gun but there has been no pressure from either us or the Board of Aldermen to say hurry up and get this done right away. It’s really come from the community requesting this as an amenity in the community. Not everybody has the yards to garden like we do. There have been about 60 people who have expressed interest in signing up. It’s not something that came out of the blue, it has been in our planning documents and it’s something that’s been reviewed and we have given our advisory opinion.

Randy York, 10 Longview Rd.

Mrs. York asked, Teresa, I’d like to ask about what the garden committee did for the residents that came to the Feb. 9th meeting. Several residents showed up that had very serious concerns about the access to the garden and at that time several people spoke. One gentleman made a point to talk about seeing if the committee would consider micro-gardens. We like the idea of a community garden but feel that you need to have the support of the host. If you’re going to put it next to a neighborhood, you don’t have to choose to put it in a residential area or right next to a neighborhood. You can try hard to get it someplace where it’s not going to affect neighbors. If you do put it in a neighborhood one of the criteria we talked about is that you need to have the support of the neighborhood. We brought up the idea of having micro gardens. At the Feb 9th meeting we
were taking about 30-40 plots. We weren't necessarily concerned with the garden being at that field at that point. At that time we were concerned with the Longview Rd. access because we didn't think you thought it through. We didn't think you considered the negative aspects of that access. We expressed our reasons at that meeting on why we thought that you probably don't want to go through a residential neighborhood and put the garden right there. We talked about different accesses and we talked about looking at the possibility of smaller gardens throughout the city rather than one big garden right in somebody’s back yard. This garden is going to be right in two people’s back yard at the end of the cul-de-sac.

Agent Gallagher responded that it is going to be set back. That is one of the reasons we liked that larger field because we can set it farther away.

Mrs. York said it within feet of two homes and an entire residential neighborhood. Cars are going to be drive through.

Agent Gallagher said it’s not going to be a few feet. It will be towards the back of the field.

Mrs. York asked how the committee discussed our suggestion about smaller gardens? What work was done to look at other alternatives?

Agent Gallagher responded that we were given the task to come up with a garden for this year. That is what the Board of Aldermen asked us to do. That is what we are doing.

Mrs. York said so in spite of the public comments, so in other words, the public comment went nowhere. And in spite of the public comment a couple of weeks later the garden went from 30-40 plots to 60.

Agent Gallagher said I don’t know where you are getting 30-40. We never discussed 30-40. Maybe there was an individual you talked with that said it but I never heard it.

Jim Beecher, 22 Longview Ave.

Mr. Beecher said Mary King said 30-40 repeatedly.

Agent Gallagher responded that she was speaking for herself. We have individual members that can say things but we had not decided that.

Mrs. York said you are asking us to support you on something that we have no site plan. We’ve had very few details on what you are going to do and how you are going to do it and the few concerns we’ve brought forth to the garden committee have not been addressed. How can you ask for our support when you are not giving us a legitimate plan to look at?

Agent Gallagher said that there would be a public informational meeting on Monday where there will be site plans.

Mrs. York asked, so it’s not a done deal?

Agent Gallagher said when you asked that I personally gave it a 50-50 chance that we would have any garden in Shelton. Now what has changed is we have received across the board community support, except for your street.

Mrs. York said she hasn’t seen any of it and I asked you for a list of the people.
Chairman Harbinson commented that it does seem that a lot of the concerns are really specific for the garden committee. In terms of the Conservation Commission and our advice to the BOA and P&Z of how open space parcels that are under city ownership be utilized by the community, we've given that advice. Mrs. York said that is why we're here. When Teresa is giving her report to you are you getting the real picture of what's going on here? I don't think so.

Agent Gallagher stated that the garden committee doesn't report to the Conservation Commission. I am giving this as a courtesy. Chairman Harbinson said again we are purely giving our recommendation of what open space parcel are suitable for a community garden. We gave 3 locations that we thought would be suitable, with the Klapik being our first choice. Someone asked if you look in White Hills or Huntington, or any other section of the city except Long Hill Ave?

Chairman Harbinson said there were 3 parcels that were identified; the Tall Farm off of Long Hill Ave, the Klapik Farm off of Long Hill/Longview and the Wiacek property off of Meadow St. Since the time that we gave our opinion we have received a detail environmental study done for other purposes of the Wiacek property, Soundview open space and the Summerfield Gardens open space. This report identified what we already somewhat knew from the development plans that had been done for that parcel is that while it is open meadow there is significant wetlands and the soil types are wet.

The same unidentified resident asked if there is no other open space other than Long Hill Ave?

Chairman Harbinson responded that the other open space parcel that is currently agricultural land is French’s Farm in White Hills. That has a deed restriction from the DEP that anything we do, even establishing a trail, has to get approval from them. It also is currently licensed to a farmer who actively uses it for more than just hay.

Commissioner McCreery asked if we could amend our recommendation to add that access be through Long Hill Ave?

Chairman Harbinson said we didn’t get into that detail. We were just simply asked which open space parcels would be suitable?

Commissioner McCreery said that the idea that there is opposition to a vegetable garden just blows my mind.

Commissioner Welsh said that the garden should be off of Long Hill Ave. because the community is going to embrace this because already 60 people signed up. We want to show it off and have it be a showpiece community garden.

Chairman Harbinson said that is not our purview. All we were asked where it should go.

Commissioner McCreery asked if there is any reason why we can't add that as a recommendation.
Agent Gallagher said that the access is something we would look at in the future. There are other considerations and we want to hear from the engineering department. **Commissioner McCreery MOVED to recommend that the community garden at the Klapik farm have access off Long Hill Avenue. SECONDED by Commissioner Welsh.**

Discussion:
Commissioner Tate said he is concerned with safety. Conservation deals with land use. We don’t deal with traffic but you do have to consider the safety issue or if the site will be negatively impacted with the driveway. This may have to go through wetlands and that requires a fairly extensive non-use of the property or disturbance. I don’t know enough about this property and I would be amiss being responsible if I didn’t look.

Commissioner McCreery said I am not saying we have to do it, I am saying I am recommending that access. Engineering would look at the site. **Chairman Harbinson amended the motion to say to look at alternative access points.**

Chairman Harbinson said this is the City Engineer’s call on the access point. Commissioner Tate said he would have to look at it to be able to really recommend anything.

There was discussion of the area.
Mr. Carstensen expressed opposition from the neighborhood for the community garden.
Mrs. York said there is no need for a garden for the people in that area. We all have our own garden. It would be people from outside our area using our road. I understand it’s a public road but I’m telling you, you are bringing outside people through a neighborhood.

Mrs. York asked do you have a city use at the end your cul-de-sac?
Commissioner McCreery responded that there is a farm at the end of the cul-de-sac. If I had city land near me I don’t have the right to dictate what is used there.

Vice-Chairman Dyer said I have 4 baseball fields behind my house.
Chairman Harbinson excused himself to go to another meeting. But before I go I want to say this. In terms of open space it was purchased by all city residents. You live on a city road. It is not a private street. I hear what you are saying about it being a quiet community because I live on the next street. It is an open space parcel owned by the city to be utilized as the city decision-makers see fit with input from the community. You are giving input whether it be a petition to the Board of Aldermen or comment to us. I think a lot of your concerns should not be directed here. It should be to the garden committee or to the Board of Aldermen who created the ad-hoc committee.
Vice-Chairman Dyer identified himself and said he would be chairing the meeting.

Mrs. York said she would make one more comment and then she would be quiet. I wanted to speak to Ed’s comment that these are just gardeners that we are talking about. Did anybody see the article in the newspaper of all the gardeners who emerged on city hall in Bridgeport with their shovels and pitchforks demanding $70K for their community gardens?

Commissioner Welsh said that was for the Bridgeport community Land Trust. They are a separate non-profit group. They are looking for Bridgeport to support their endeavors.

Commissioner Tate said I don’t relate our problems to Bridgeport and I don’t think we really have a lot of parallel.

Jill Wakeley, 22 Longview

Ms. Wakeley said that our first problem was with the access. Then we were told it would be about 30 plots and then in a heartbeat it got changed to 60. We’re talking about 40 acres. Is it going to be 600 in a matter of years? Are there any expansion plans? Is there any insurance to the neighborhood that you are not going to expand past 60? The North Street Milford garden has about 120 plots. We were able to go to that garden and we are not residents and we took pictures and could do whatever we pleased, no one bothered us and it was on a main road. Being on a main road it was visible and could be monitored by the police if they were riding by. Our issue was the access and the amount of plots incensed all of us when we got the letter about 60 plots after the Feb. 9th meeting where our comments were not addressed in the garden committee minutes and we were not aware that they were going to be voting. Someone got an email saying that they are no longer looking at the Longview lot and the situation changed in an instant. We know that the Klapiks are not in favor of this property and we are not in favor of this property being used as a garden. We think there hasn’t been enough research into the possible sites because of the spring deadline. We would like to ask you to put more time and effort this year into looking into more parcels of land for this purpose. The Klapiks don’t want it and we don’t want it. I think you can find other places in town for it. It’s being used as a geo-cache, it’s being hayed, the neighbors are walking the property, people from town and use it but not to a major degree. You are now affecting our pocketbooks. The property values of our homes are going to be drastically reduced. I am a former realtor and I am telling you right now many people would not look at a house that had a community garden that had 60 to 120 to 240 plots with cars going up and down and up and down on the weekends and everything else. It’s absolutely ridiculous that the Long Hill Ave. access is not being considered heavily. You’re talking about increased traffic onto Laurel Wood and older people who don’t know the streets you are taking the turn right off the slope of a hill. If it’s on Long Hill Ave. it’s flat. We ask you to enlist our help if you’re going to go that route to do whatever is necessary to make the access from Long Hill Ave. If you need to plant shrubs, if you need to put in a fence, if you need to raise money, I will
personally volunteer to be the fundraiser for any money that you need to put in to make that Long Hill Ave. area accessible. The Klapiks do not want a garden, I can tell you that much now.

Commissioner McCreery said I don’t want to argue with the Klapiks. It’s not appropriate. I hear mixed signals. On one hand I hear it was going to devalue your houses and the last thing you want was a garden. Then I heard could you get access through Long Hill Ave.?

Ms. Wakeley said the devaluation comes from the traffic. Commissioner McCreery said let’s assume the access is not off the cul-de-sac, and assuming it’s going to be set back, and let’s assume it could expand, is the mere fact that there is going to be a community garden on that property objectionable to the community?

Ms. Wakeley answered no, it’s the access. The traffic is the issue of the devaluation of the property. With that amount of traffic and a garden at the end of your street is going to devalue the property.

Commissioner Tate said I think we can figure this thing out. There are a few things that the committee has to deal with that is out of the purview of this Commission. One of those might be the limitation of the number of plots and then they may have to look at another location. I think it would be irresponsible for any of us to approve an access or recommend one without seeing it and having some study done. If you know anything about this Commission that has been long-standing is we do our homework. Anybody who says we haven’t looked at this property, you really don’t know the people on this Commission. You are lucky, people most of the members are very knowledgeable about the land, the open space, how we purchased it, and were very instrumental in the purchases. We are also concerned about the natural resources that are on the land which is really the charge of this Commission. To say that we really should take longer to look at it, we have done it for a long time. We don’t publicize it but we are a public commission and you are always welcome to come. The agendas are posted. The bottom line is that we can work on access and make a recommendation. As long as it makes sense and we are not going to disrupt in a serious negative way the natural resources, we would work it out. We don’t have any responsibility in our Commission’s charge to deal with the traffic issue or funding.

Ms. Wakeley said we are asking to please keep looking at other sites. Are the soil samples from the dog park not acceptable?

Commissioner Tate said the dog park a year was not a dog park. A group of people were interested in the community garden and went to the Mayor. The Mayor said there was always a garden at the corner of Route 108 and Nells Rock Rd. So in the middle of summer someone went there and plowed the yard to ready it for a garden. It’s still plowed up. It was then asked why are we doing it and here? That began the study of what makes sense and where. People wanted a garden and they all thought that location would be the right one but no one had any understanding how the garden and the animal shelter or the dog
park would fit. Then the neighbors came out in force, like you did complaining about the animal shelter. The site is not suitable for a community garden. It’s not large enough and is not suitable for a lot of reasons. But, it is not for us to decide. The garden committee decided what they needed for that garden. Professional gardeners are members of the committee. They determine which sites would make the most sense as well as other input. The actual services of the program really should be dictated by the committee. The land use is something we would deal with. Access to the open space is an issue and I think we can deal with that tonight. I think that site is a good site for the community garden. When you look at the other sites I think you would probably would agree. There are other sites that we don’t have direct control over now. We had a group, Kings Mark, go out and look at some additional area around Wiacek. We are looking at whether the city should sell some of the property off of Soundview. We made a recommendation to keep it. That might be a possible site for a micro garden. I also think you should have a detailed site plan for the community garden. I would encourage the committee to do that.

It was asked how much space is available at the Nells Rock/108 location. The Commissioners said that only about ¼ acre would be available. There are some issues there. It is very rocky.

Tape 1, Side B

There was discussion about the Klapik parcel and the orientation of the proposed garden.

Commissioner Tate said that two months ago when they were recommending a property for this garden they were not even sure a community garden would be something the residents would embrace. Here we are now we find the community does want it and now we have to deal with those factors related to it. The residents of Longview asked who the people are that want this garden? Where in town do they live? Are they condo owners? Are they going to travel 10 miles to come to this garden?

Commissioner Tate said they would have to ask the garden committee. Agent Gallagher said they are from all over Shelton and yes, they would travel to the garden.

Mrs. York said she thinks you’d get more support for your community garden if you don’t scare people and appear calloused to their needs and concerns by just saying the city can do what they want to do. We had all these suggestions at the first meeting and the garden thanked us and they thought we had very good suggestions. And then we saw none of that in the minutes of the meeting. I don’t think you want to create the situation where you decide whether to put it at one cul-de-sac or the other. All that does is pit neighbors against each other. It’s a community garden. It’s not a vital public need. We’re talking about 60 people who are going to benefit from this garden.
Commissioner McCreery said that the community overall benefits from having a variety of amenities. Can we get back to my motion, Mr. Chairman?

Discussion:
Commissioner McCreery stated he wants to recommend that if possible it come off of Long Hill. Chairman Harbinson and Commissioner Tate said they don’t agree with him.
Commissioner McCreery said that at a minimum want them to look at all the options. Is it appropriate to ask to cap the size of the garden? Chairman Harbinson said that there are still a lot of unknowns in terms of size and the water. I would suggest that the motion state that the committee come back to the Commission with a final draft plan. The Commissioners agreed.

**Commissioner McCreery MOVED that in conjunction with the recommendation of the parcel off of Long Hill Ave. to be utilized as a site for a community garden that all issues of access be examined, not to assume that the access would be off Longview Rd. The BOA ad-hoc garden committee bring a draft site plan for review by the Conservation Commission for comment.** SECONDED by Vice-Chairman Dyer.

Discussion: Vice-Chairman Dyer said we could also have an input the land can support in terms of limiting the number of plots. Not only are you talking about a certain number for gardening but also talking about a certain area for parking.

A voice vote was taken, all were in favor; MOTION PASSED.

Mary Sokol, 3 Longview Rd
Mrs. Sokol said she wanted to know, before the BOA makes a decision we have to have another meeting of this group and you have to give them the recommendations?
Commissioner Tate said the BOA works independently of us. They can do whatever they want.
Mrs. Sokol said so next week they could say yes, it’s going to happen.
Chairman Harbinson said he would recommend that your interest expressed should be more appropriately expressed to the community garden ad-hoc committee to the Board of Aldermen. The comments about us being calloused are incorrect. The comments about minutes and not showing things has nothing to do with us. It’s not our committee. You are in the wrong place for that. Bring your comments to them. A letter will be sent to the committee copied to the BOA requesting that we comment on the final site plan. The BOA can do this without our comment but I doubt it would happen that way. They will ask for our opinion and we will give it.
Vice-Chairman Dyer said it is getting close to the time of planting spinach so there is a time issue. But it was noted that it doesn’t have to happen this year.
Chairman Harbinson asked is there anything more that is in the purview of the Conservation Commission that we can give you advice or education on?
Ms. Wakeley said so you are saying now, in the City of Shelton, that it is the only plot suitable for gardening?
Commissioner Tate answered no, it’s our recommended plot for the garden.
Ms. Wakeley said we are asking that you put more time and effort into finding another finding another plot.
Vice-Chairman Dyer commented that where ever we find it there will be a similar group of people.
Mrs. York said maybe the community doesn’t want to have a garden.
Vice-Chairman Dyer said there are 60 people who would come and say yes, we do want it.
Mrs. York said you have hundreds of people saying that they don’t want it. You need to consider the public input. If the public doesn’t want it, they don’t want it.
Commissioner Goodman stated with all due respect I think it’s very clear we are listening to you.
Mrs. York said we’ll see.
Commissioner Goodman said no, we’re listening. We just approved the motion to look at other access alternatives. I think that’s what we can do. We appreciate your input.
An unidentified resident asked if one of the farmers in town would volunteer some of the state or city owned property that they lease to be used for this?
Chairman Harbinson answered that there are some active farmers in town that have sold their development rights to their property.
Commissioner McCrery said that if he were their lawyer I would say no way. You would be sued by the first person to trip over a berm. There are liability issues.
Chairman Harbinson said that would be something you could bring up to the garden committee.
Barbara Murzin, 23 Longview Rd.
Mrs. Murzin said she abuts the property. We’ve had already had incidents in the open space with parties at night. We had a police chase last spring where they finally had to tow the police car. We also had an abandoned car.
Commissioner Tate stated that at the Commission we have heard a lot around the community and you are not alone. There are always incidents no matter where you are. We have issues with ATV’s, paintball, hunting, etc.
Mrs. Murzin said that no matter what activity goes in there we just don’t want the access to come through Longview Rd.
Commissioner Goodman responded that we understand that.
Royce York, 10 Longview Rd.
Mr. York asked who would oversee the garden after it’s established?
Chairman Harbinson answered that it is a very good question. The Board of Aldermen created this ad-hoc committee and it might be Parks & Rec who has an active staff who already maintains the community center and ball fields. It may come back to the Conservation Commission to be the overseer as more of a passive use of our city properties. I don’t know the answer to that.
Mr. York said that it is fairly important because if in fact it gets plowed through our cul-de-sac there is a lot of reasons we’re concerns, with obvious reasons of water and how it’s going to be accessed for water. There will be obviously ways of getting the water to the site that are not farm equipment.

Chairman Harbinson said again, these are questions for the garden committee.

Mr. York said that I am wondering who is going to govern this. For instance, these supposed drum with water.

Agent Gallagher asked if she could answer it before you continue? The Mayor has instructed us to look into tapping into the water main.

Mr. York said he is interested in operational hours and things along that line.

Chairman Harbinson asked if there are any other questions that are for the Conservation related issues.

Mike Zilinek, 18 Longview

Mr. Zilinek said that you are saying this is going to be natural garden type community. Who is going to policing if they are or are not using chemicals and if there is chemical runoff? Has the Fire Marshal been consulted for access, whether it’s an emergency access within the garden? Or if an emergency access would be blocked? My father is a Fire Marshal and he brought that up. Also, the list of people, I don’t know if you can break it down, but are they all condo owners? Agent Gallagher said no. Mr. Zilinek said some have property and they can garden on their own property. Agent Gallagher said no, just because you have property doesn’t mean it’s something you can garden on. You might not have any sun, you might have the wrong kind of soil, you might have wetlands.

Mr. Zilinek said let’s talk about the condo owners. I sent a letter today about the fact that I went on the internet and did a search and within 2 miles of Longview Rd there are 7 registered sex offenders. How do I know those people are not going to be coming into a neighborhood of 6 single women and a bunch of children?

The Commissioners all said this is something they can’t answer and is not in their purview. Various comments were made.

Chairman Harbinson stopped the discussion and said this has nothing to do with Conservation. Let’s move on. We understand your concerns.

C. Approval of Minutes

Vice-Chairman Dyer MOVED to approve the minutes from the February 3, 2010 regular meeting. SECONDED by Commissioner Dutkanicz. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

D. Shelton Lakes Recreation Path – upgrade to handicapped accessible standards

Vice-Chairman Dyer and Commissioner Tate talked about the design aspects of the bid process.
Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that the next major effort is to come up with a design build specification to go out to bid in the April timeframe. The cost of this would be using both city funds and the recreational trails grant that we expect to get. We will go out to bid with a series of milestone bids that based on the amount of money received is how far along we can progress. Commissioner Tate and Trails Committee member Terry Gallagher have offered to help in the design specification. Our goal is to get that written this month. Commissioner Tate asked when we expect to get the grant money? Vice-Chairman Dyer said that we have been notified that we received the award. We believe that now that Senator Bunning has withdrawn his objection to the highway bill the money that is for this grant was in there so we believe we are now going to get the award notice.

Regarding the granite pillars, as you know we have a very nice logo design that was used on the existing pillars on the Rec Path. Now that we are going to extend the Rec Path to Lane Street and other areas we wanted to get additional 5’ granite pillars. We had some trouble getting a quote but it has finally come in. The total for 6 pillars is $3,864.00. This is in line with the previous purchase and is from the same supplier.

**Vice-Chairman Dyer MOVED to approve the purchase of 6 – 5’ granite pillars with the Shelton Rec Path logo at a cost of $3,864.00 from Swenson. Installation cost will be determined at a later date. The funds are to come from the Land Improvements budget line item (001-1300-414.60-01) SECONDED by Chairman Harbinson. All were in favor; MOTION PASSED.**

### E. Trails Committee Report – Bill Dyer

Vice-Chairman Dyer reported as follows:

1. Planned Rec Path Projects for 2010
   a. Blue Dot Trail
   We have been working on connecting the Blue Dot trail from Indian Well parking area down to Shelton Lakes. We have cut it through to where it would allow us to cross Meadow Street. From Meadow Street we have cut a hole through the briars and we have a route all the way through the Wiacek property over to Constitution. Then we cut an area through to Wellington Court, to Independence, and then on to Route 108. Agent Gallagher has the paint now and will be working on the marking this weekend. She will first start on changing the marking at Dominick trail from orange to blue.

   b. Bertucci’s Restaurant contribution offer
   Bertucci’s restaurant sent us a note saying they are really in favor of trails and asked if there is anything they can do to help. There is discussion of maybe having a public event where we would accept their offer. We would have to have a sign-up sheet so we know how many to expect.
2. Boy Scout projects
We did have a presentation by two boy scouts who will be replacing the Jay pond bridge. They also will cut a trail that will by-pass the cliff for mountain bikers. I got a call from the Eagle Scout that put the kiosk at Birchbank at the blue dot trail to move it to our property. He originally built it on the state property.

3. Expenses for reimbursement
Commissioner McCreery MOVED to reimburse Terry Gallagher for various equipment for the Trails Committee in the amount of $129.21. SECONDED by Chairman Harbinson. All were in favor; MOTION PASSED.

5. Trails Annual Report
Terry Gallagher created the report and will be emailed to the Commissioners.

F. Dog Park Status
Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that the committee had a fundraising meeting that he was unable to attend. Agent Gallagher mentioned that there are flyers around town to sign up to purchase a memorial brick. Agent Gallagher said her daughters Girl Scout troop is painting an oil drum to be used as a trash container at the dog park. Chairman Harbinson reported that Parks & Rec have been doing clearing at the site but as of yet there is not a site plan showing integration of the Rec Path through the site. There should be a meeting in the near future to get that going.

G. Community Garden
Addressed in the public portion

H. Environmental Review Team (ERT) report for OS 80
Wiacek/Soundview: Status
Agent Gallagher emailed all the Commissioners the draft report from Kings Mark of their review of the properties. Chairman Harbinson said that the report does identify the value of the soil types and the agricultural value. The highly valued agricultural soils are on the parcel that is adjacent to the ball fields and partly towards Meadow Street. Those areas are wet and may not be suitable for intense agricultural purposes. The report did address the house on Soundview Ave. as seeming to have the architecture of a Sears catalog house. Commissioner Tate mentioned that the history center has records of this house. Chairman Harbinson said that they recommended that it might be a candidate for the state registry for historic places. The report indicated that if it was sold or leased the property you might want to put some restrictive covenants on the parcel so that the architecture could be preserved.
The report did mention a potential location for a community garden on the Soundview Ave. property. They also mentioned the Wiacek parcel near the barn. They did mention that the barn had educational opportunities. It also recommended that the area where the soil had been removed or stock-piled that it be restored before invasives take over and that a certain grass type be planted. The report does support our earlier recommendation that the Soundview Ave. property be retained as City property.
The Commissioners will review the entire report on their own time.

I. BOA request for recommendation regarding acceptance of open space properties including Map 177, Lot 82 (Dickenson Drive), Map 180, Lot 64 (Thoreau Drive) and Map 177, Lot 64 (Meghan Court)
Addressed at the February meeting.

J. Review of PZC or IWC Applications for Subdivisions and/or Developments

   1. Old Applications/Monitor/Follow-up

      None

   2. New Applications

      None

K. Communications

None

K. Executive Session

Commissioner Tate MOVED to go into Executive Session to discuss the Quality of Life property list at 8:40 P.M.. SECONDED by Vice-Chairman Dyer. All were in favor; MOTION PASSED.

Vice-Chairman Dyer MOVED to return to regular session at 9:23 P.M. SECONDED by Commissioner McCreery. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

Chairman Harbinson noted that no motions took place in Executive Session.

L. Comments By Members

Agent Gallagher mentioned that we have 273 fans on Facebook.
M. Adjournment
The next regular meeting is Wednesday, April 7, 2010.

Commissioner Goodman MOVED to adjourn. SECONDED by Commissioner Welsh. All were in favor; MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Chaya
Clerk, Conservation Commission