CITY OF SHELTON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Minutes for the Regular Meeting on Wednesday, March 4, 2015 at 7:00 P.M.
Minutes should be considered a draft version until approved by CC at their next meeting.

Present:
Tom Harbinson, Chairman
Bill Dyer, Vice-Chairman
James Tate, Commissioner
Joe Walsh, Commissioner
Ed McCreery, Commissioner
Pat Gajdosik, Commissioner
Teresa Gallagher, Conservation Agent

Also Present: Terry Gallagher

Absent: Sheri Dutkanicz, Commissioner

A. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance – 7:00 P.M.
B. Approval of Minutes
C. Public Portion (Items Not on Agenda)
D. Trails Committee Report – Bill Dyer
E. Open Space Trust Account Status
F. Budget Status: 2015-2016 proposed budget
G. Review of PZC or IWC Applications for Subdivisions/Developments
   1. Old Applications/monitor/Follow Up
      Hawk’s Ridge PZC #13-17, Long Hill Cross Road, PDD Step #2, detailed site plans. Approved PDD allows for 54 single-family lots and 57 condominium units.
   2. New Applications
      1. None
H. Ad-Hoc Committee Reports – Conservation Agent
   1. Deer Committee – Distribution of final report.
   2. Community Garden Committee – Guest Speaker Kimberly Stoner, Entomologist, CT Ag Experiment Station, scheduled for March 9
   3. Anti-Litter Committee – Clean Sweep 2015 in April; Crack down on phone book deliveries
I. Communications (sent or received)
J. Quality of Life – Executive Session (Land Acquisition & Security Issues)
K. Comments By Members
L. Adjournment – Next Regular Scheduled Meeting – April 1, 2015
A. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance
Chairman Harbinson called the meeting of the Conservation Commission to order at 7:09 p.m. All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Approval of Minutes
Commissioner Gajdosik moved to approve the February Minutes. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Dyer. All in favor. MOTION PASSED.

C. Public Portion (Items Not on Agenda)
None.

D. Trails Committee Report
• Vice-Chairman Bill Dyer reported they may move the marshmallow hike to March 15 due to poor conditions.
• Discussion of trail/parking conditions
• Map boxes were built during a work party.
• There are no Boy Scouts in need of projects at this time.
• Many events are being affected by weather.
• There were no expenses this month.
• There are new Paugasussett Trail maps prepared by Teresa Gallagher.

E. Open Space Trust Account Status
No Report.

F. Budget Status: 2015-2016 proposed budget
Chairman Harbinson reported that the only change in the budget from last year is the full-time employee salary. Discussion.
Chairman Harbinson asked for input on line items. Teresa Gallagher would like to increase dues and subscription fees by $10.00. Vice-Chairman Dyer pointed out the desire to update the Rec Path. He will have cost prepared for next meeting. Discussion.

Commissioner Gajdosik moved to recommend to approve the budget. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Dyer. All in favor. MOTION PASSED.
G. Review of PZC or IWC Applications for Subdivisions and/or Developments

1. Old Applications/Monitor/Follow-up
   a. PDD#77 Site Plan review, Hawk’s Ridge, PZC #13-17, Long Hill Cross Road.

Commissioner Walsh discussed the communication received from the property owner regarding refusal of site review by SWCD. Discussion on having P&Z comment on the issue.

Teresa Gallagher discussed her findings report that was distributed to Conservation Commission. (Report attached)

A motion was made by Commissioner McCreery to have Chairman Harbinson send Teresa Gallagher’s environmental report on Hawk’s Ridge to the Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission, copying Inland-Wetlands enforcement. Seconded by Commissioner Walsh. All in favor. MOTION PASSED.

2. New Applications
   None.

H. Ad-Hoc Committee Reports – Conservation Agent

1. Deer Committee
   The report has been given to the Board of Alderman. Discussion of presenting to the Board of Alderman.

2. Community Gardens Committee
   Guest speaker in City Hall auditorium on March 9 at 7:00 pm.

3. Anti-Litter Committee
   Discussion of phone book deliveries and the cost to the city to dispose.

I. Communications (Sent or Received)
   None.
J. Quality of Life – Executive Session (Land Acquisition and Security Issues)

Chairman Harbinson moved to go to Executive Session. All in Favor.

Executive Session was entered into at 7:50 P.M.
Executive Session ended at 8:05 P.M.

Vice-Chairman Dyer will review the existing Quality of Life list.

K. Comments By Members

The Conservation Commission formally welcomed new Commissioner Pat Gajodik.

Chairman Harbinson spoke about the Shelton Farmer’s Market. The 31 person association met and are awaiting the mayor to sign off on the lease agreement. The possible opening is June. Crop damage permit discussion.

L. Adjournment

Chairman Harbinson adjourned the meeting at 8:12 P.M.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, April 1, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Scalenghe
Clerk, Conservation Commission
Memo

To: Conservation Commission
From: Teresa Gallagher, Conservation Agent
Date: March 10, 2015
Re: Hawk’s Ridge Site Plan Review PZC #13-17

I reviewed site plans for the Hawks Ridge PDD dated Dec. 16, 2014 with regard to environmental impacts. This review was based on the premise that the site will be intensely developed: Step One of the PDD process was approved previously by the Planning and Zoning Commission, allowing the applicant to build up to 54 single family homes and 57 Condominium units on the parcel. At issue is whether the proposed layout could be improved to enhance Shelton’s environment and quality of life.

1. Conservation Areas

The plan submitted to Conservation identifies only 1.5 acres out of 30.2 acres as “Conservation Area,” and this consists almost entirely of wetland or associated wetland buffer areas that are already protected under Inland Wetland regulations. This represents 5% of the subject parcel (shown on the map as red). Other “Community Space” areas shown on the map in green, orange, and purple are not labeled as conservation areas and could presumably be cleared and landscaped.

Residential development normally results in a greater percentage of conservation area preserved to offset the impacts of development on the greater community. A conventional subdivision would require a 10% minimum set aside, equivalent to 3 acres on this site. Conventional subdivision regulations also require that not more than 25% of the required open space be composed of wetland or steep slopes. Under a Planned Residential District (PRD), the conservation open space requirement would be 15,000 square feet for each unit that could theoretically be constructed under a conventional subdivision. Assuming 25 conventional one-acre lots could be created on this site, the open space requirement would be 28% or 8.6 acres using the PRD mechanism.

Recommendation: Some of the areas marked for “Reserved Community Open Space” should be designated as conservation areas, particularly the larger areas on the southern half of the property, although it should not include any of the narrow buffer strips shown between units or along roadways. In addition, strategically removing a few units could result in a more valuable greenspace corridor between the mostly isolated vernal pools and the preserved conservation areas (explained further below). Finally, all conservation areas should be fully protected from activities such as brush clearing, tree trimming, removal of dead wood, and dumping of landscaping debris or leaves.

2. Encroachment Potential:

The site plan I reviewed does not show buildings, but an earlier plan from 2013, which appears to be very similar, depicts locations where the conservation area would be only 10 or 20 feet from a dwelling. In my experience, when there
is insufficient area around a home for a yard or landscaping, there is a strong temptation for people to expand into the conservation/wetland areas and to “maintain” or “tidy up” such areas. This has become more of a problem with the rise of Lyme Disease because residents are concerned about ticks living in the vegetation. These areas may also be sprayed with acaricides to kill ticks, a common practice in the area. Acarides are highly toxic to aquatic life, even when marketed as “organic” or “environmentally friendly.” In addition conservation areas located too close to dwellings are sometimes disturbed during construction, planted with grass for soil stabilization, and then mowed in perpetuity.

**Recommendation:** Areas too close to buildings are not realistic conservation areas and should not be accepted as such. Consider establishing a minimum distance between buildings and conservation areas for the project.

### 3. Water Temperature to the Far Mill River:

The Far Mill River, which supports both native and stocked trout, is only a few hundred feet away. Trout are highly sensitive to water temperature and dissolved oxygen levels (which decrease as water temperatures increase). Best Management Practices for stormwater runoff do not take water temperature into account, and in some cases can even lead to increased temperatures. Roofing, pavement, and sunny detention ponds all lead to higher runoff temperatures.

**Recommendations:** Plant shade trees such as red maples (*Acer rubrum*) around the southern detention pond to shade the water. Protect the plantings from deer browse until they reach a safe height. Plant shade trees on the south and west sides of new streets and driveways, rather than small ornamental trees that would not shade the pavement during the afternoon. Use light-colored shingles on new buildings (which are also more energy efficient than dark shingles), and consider using light-colored chip seal for pavement surfacing if available.

### 4. Wildlife:

Most forms of commonly seen suburban wildlife (e.g. deer, raccoon, coyote, skunk) will adapt very well to the proposed development. Less adaptable are certain amphibian species. According to the Soil Science Report, “Two vernal pool habitat areas were identified within Wetland Area 1…. Numerous wood frog tadpoles and 8-9 spotted salamander egg masses were noted.” While the site design I reviewed may preserve the hydrologic functions of the wetlands, it is unlikely to preserved the wildlife function of the vernal pools because there is no viable corridor for migrating amphibians to travel between upland areas where they live and the vernal pools where they breed.

Spotted salamanders have been known to live up to 32 years and normally return to the same vernal pool every year. Adults typically reside in wooded areas up to 600 feet away or more from breeding ponds. A salamander migrating west from the vernal pools to the open area to the southwest would need to travel over pavement and around new buildings and a pool before coming to a stone wall blocking its way. Traveling in other directions would result in coming to Route 8 or lawns of the new development.

**Recommendation:** Use stone walls to both delineate the protected conservation area and to redirect salamanders heading upland from the vernal pools towards more habitable areas (away from yards or Rt 8). Preserve a mostly wooded conservation corridor between the vernal pool areas and the area to the southwest, and designate that community space as a conservation area. Preserving more of the upland area immediately adjacent to the wetlands would also be beneficial.