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Call to Order
Present: Tom Harbinson, Chairman
         Bill Dyer, Vice-Chairman
         Sherri Dutkanicz, Commissioner
         Jim Tate, Commissioner
         Jim Goodman, Commissioner
         Joe Welsh, 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 7:05 p.m. All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
B. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Dutkanicz MOVED to approve the minutes from the November 2, 2011 Regular meeting. SECONDED by Commissioner Welsh. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

C. Public Portion (items not on agenda)

Guy Beardsley, from the Shelton Farmers Market Association

Mr. Beardsley reported that they had a meeting this morning between the two, essentially, opposing groups to run the market. I was my group and the other group headed by Stacia Monahan. I was hoping that someone from that group would have been here this evening because what I report is what I heard. The Mayor started the meeting by saying that he appreciated everyone being there. There were about 6 people representing each side. He said that he visualized based on his previous discussion a week ago that the summer market could run the way it was but there would be a separate entity for the winter market. There would be an overlap between the two markets, live November and maybe April or May on the other end. It was not defined at all as to who would run the overlap situation. This would require a separate contract for each entity. I’ve already got a contract with the city for my group to run the market. We could get out that immediately if needed. Stacia read a prepared letter to the group. Essentially it was the same position that they have taken in the past, that there should be no buying in of products that you don’t grow. That is very much opposed to our position which is based upon the standard exemption form that the Dept. of Agriculture puts out for the WIC program. That states you can buy in if you have it on your crop plan, if you happen to run out. Stacia’s position is that you can’t sell what you buy in unless whoever else grows it is completely out. We don’t have a decision yet. But what Stacia said that the Monahan’s would not be in a position to run a separate winter market this year. She is focusing on next November as a date they would start. That’s fine with us because it gives us an opportunity to plan for a winter market next year.

On November 19th we ran a special market and it was excellent. I think it was successful primarily because there was an article in the paper written by Anne Amato that morning. I talked with 30 separate groups of people that came in and they said they read the article at the breakfast table and decided since they had never been to the market they would come down and take a look. Unfortunately they didn’t get there at the beginning of the market and there was not a whole lot left for sale. That’s a real turn-off to anybody coming to the market and expects to see a lot of things and they were not there. Whether we can get those people back, I have no idea.

On Saturday, December 17th we will be running another market. Hopefully we’ll have a Christmas tree as a door prize and maybe a couple of other things along with some decorations. Anne said she would have another article about this market event.
Vice-Chairman Dyer said you said that a decision hasn’t been made. Who is making the decision?
Mr. Beardsley said he doesn’t know. The Mayor said the City doesn’t have any business running the market. He did mention the Conservation Commission and I told him that I would be here tonight to report on the meeting. The Mayor gave us all copies of the Derby-Shelton Rotary Club pavilion plans. He said it would be constructed next year for the markets. He didn’t say anything at all as to whether the market could run in there or now. It’s obvious a market could run in there.
Commissioner Tate said, Guy, after all what has gone back and forth over the last several months, what have you taken away from this in terms of the organization of the market? Does there need to be a joint group making decisions on this?
Mr. Beardsley said we have a committee that runs our market and Stacia says she has a committee that would run her market.
Vice-Chairman Dyer said so her market would be the winter one and yours would be the summer one?
Mr. Beardsley answered as it stands right now, but everything is still up in the air. Commissioner Tate asked if you see the need.
Mr. Beardsley commented that if we run a joint market there would definitely have to be a committee of representatives from both sides. In my own conjecture, is that the Monahan concept comes a little bit due to the CSA (community supported agriculture) they run, the customers in the CSA have to take what is grown. They don’t have any option on that, they have to take what is grown. They get a different box each week, but it’s what has been grown. You either take it or leave it. I think that is the way they like the Farmers Market to be.
Commissioner McCreery commented that you mentioned that “group two”, for lack of a better word, is objecting to farmers buying produce they don’t grow and selling it at the market.
Mr. Beardsley answered, right. That produce, however, has to be on their crop plan.
Commissioner McCreery asked if they buy another farmer’s produce to bring to the market, does it have to be Connecticut grown.
Mr. Beardsley answered yes, absolutely.
Commissioner McCreery said that one of their complaints which, from what I heard, was one incident 10 years ago someone bought California strawberries and sold them without disclosing that they were from another state. Is that still an issue that needs to be addressed?
Mr. Beardsley said that if that is the case, it’s illegal. That would be stopped if we know about it. Commissioner McCreery asked if it’s still a problem. Mr. Beardsley said no.
Vice-Chairman Dyer asked why you can’t just stipulate that you have to identify from whom you bought the produce, as opposed to Restaurant Depot.
Commissioner McCreery said why do you have to do that? If I buy corn from,
say, Acme Farms in Stratford, it’s not Shelton, but we’re not little fiefdoms here.
Commissioner Dutkanicz said that the customer is paying more for a product
they believe is CT grown. If I’m selling blueberries grown in my backyard and
then I run out I should be able to go to the Jones farm and then sell them. That’s
ok.
Mr. Beardsley said that according to Stacia it’s ok providing that in our market
you identify that product, as having been grown by “whomever”.
Vice-Chairman Dyer said what’s wrong with that? I don’t understand why anyone
would object to that.
Chairman Harbinson said you’d have to ask Stacia.
Mr. Beardsley said he didn’t see anything wrong with that.
Commissioner McCreery said the issue is that no one else in the market has that
product to sell. You can’t go off your farm unless no one else in that market has
the same thing.
Chairman Harbinson talked about the existing contract they have to run the
market for 2 years. If another market association wanted to utilize the facility, the
two possibilities are that they would run concurrently with you or you would
modify your license to operate during a certain period, say, spring to fall, and
another operator would run from fall to spring.
Mr. Beardsley commented that there is another requirement is that I have to
schedule each market date. Currently I schedule Wednesday’s from 3-6PM, and
Saturday’s from 9-1PM. Anything else has to be scheduled with the City
administrative office. I don’t have complete carte-blanche to go down there at
any time.
Chairman Harbinson asked, would your association be amenable to running a
spring to fall only?
Mr. Beardsley said that is only what we could do this year. We’re hopeful that we
will grow enough next year so we can go into a winter market.
Chairman Harbinson said that this dialog has spurred your association to
consider expanding your market time into the winter.
Mr. Beardsley said very much so, and for that we are all very appreciative. We
thank the Monahans for bringing this major point up. It’s spurred not only our
market interest but whole city’s interest and the media attention. As far as I’m
concerned that’s excellent. Maybe it will improve the community service of the
market, as well as the Mayor and this Commission.
Chairman Harbinson said as you may know our Commission is advisory and we
stand ready to help expand the marketplace for agriculture in our community, not
just Shelton, but the region at large. Whatever way we can help going forward
with that, we’re here.
Mr. Beardsley said he wants to be able to keep the Commission advised in the
public portion each time and answer any questions you might have that I can
answer. Some questions I can’t answer for the Monahan’s as to what they want
to do and how their committee thinks.
Chairman Harbinson thanked Mr. Beardsley for keeping the Commission up to date.
Mr. Beardsley commented that the Mayor is very interested in this subject and reiterated several times that he does not believe the City should get involved in the running of the market.
Agent Gallagher asked if there were to be an overlap of the two markets, would they be on different days.
Mr. Beardsley said that at this point he doesn't know but thinks they probably coincide. Saturday is generally the market day for Shelton.
The Commissioners and Mr. Beardsley talked about the existing contract.
Commissioner Tate stated that they should be prepared for an increase in market activity in the next year or so due to new construction that will be taking place along Canal Street.

**D. Shelton Lakes Recreation Path, upgrade to handicapped-accessible standards. Status**

Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that he met with Dean Cawthra to discuss the work that needs to be done at the Great Ledge through the area that's parallel to Oak Valley Rd. I gave him a document that shows what we want and how it should be done. We walked the area and Dean understands what we want. The Mayor is behind the project as well. It's a great winter project. I told him we could authorize him to buy materials such as rip rap within a couple of thousand dollars.
As far as the section at the power lines to the beginning of the Bures’ property, the section parallel to Oak Valley Rd, the Trails Committee will be having a work party on Saturday. The Commissioners discussed the work needed and Agent Gallagher offered a better map.
Chairman Harbinson reminded them of the bollards he still has stored and they should schedule a date to do the installation.
Commissioner McCreery brought up the issue of the parking issues at Lane Street. The Commissioners discussed this for some time.
Vice-Chairman Dyer stated that the Huntington Herald ran an article about ATV’s and dirt bikes. Agent Gallagher talked about an article they ran a couple of weeks about some local kids who competed on their ATV's and they were talking about the kids riding around trails around their property and the way it was worded it wasn’t clear what that meant, whether it was on their property or around their property. I looked it up and it is in an area where we do get complaints about ATV activity. I did contact the editor when they took my blog post and published it as if it was a letter to the editor with my name underneath it without my knowledge. Then I asked her to write something about the ATV activity and she did.
E. Trails Committee Report
Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that the Trails Committee has done an assessment of the storm damage and pretty much have taken care of most of the trails that were affected.
Agent Gallagher reported that she re-blazed Boehm Pond trail.
Vice-Chairman Dyer reported on the guided hike that they did over the Thanksgiving holiday on the Turkey Trot Trail. We had 42 people and some came with their dogs.
We are going to plan for a “marshmallow march” at Nicholdale on Saturday, January 21st at 1PM.
Vice-Chairman Dyer said that they are planning for the National Trails Day in June and are assuming that they will win the Iroquois Grant money (about $14K) and can use that money for trail improvements.
Vice-Chairman Dyer MOVED to approve the expenses for Richard Skudlarek for oil and replacement chains in the amount of $34.72.
SECONDED by Commissioner Tate. All were in favor; MOTION PASSED.
Vice-Chairman Dyer still needs to sit down with the guys at Orange Fence for the removable bollards to get a quote.

F. Electronic Communication Methods
Chairman Harbinson commented that the Huntington Herald picked up one of Agent Gallagher’s blog entries and posted it as if it were a submitted “letter to the editor”. We have a number of communication channels to different audiences. I sent an email to everyone that kind of summarized where we are so far. I think it has functioned pretty well so far, perhaps the media needs some clarification that a blog entry can’t be just cut and pasted and lifted as a letter to the editor. The way it works right now with our Facebook page having a pretty broad audience with about 600 or so followers that allows us to get our message out to people who are interested in doing a hike or if we need extra help on a work party. At this time Agent Gallagher is the only administrator. Traditionally we keep the blog entries somewhat casual.
The following is cut & pasted from Chairman Harbinson’s email to the Commissioners:
Teresa had a blog entry that was lifted without her permission by the HunHrld and made to look like it was a Letter to the Editor submission. There are different silos of information that provide feedstock for different audiences. Here is what we use.

http://sheltoncc.blogspot.com/
When the Chairman dealt with news media in the past regarding open space issues, they tended to not always get the message he hoped they would when talking on the phone, or even in person. The Jones Farm Purchase of Development Rights was a big lesson, and providing a press-release that outlined the high points in writing, helped ensure they didn’t get mis-reported. It also allowed saying the same thing once, and not repeating it with the NHReg, CtPost, HuntHrld, SheltonPatch, VallyIndy, etc. Just 15min ea would eat up 2hrs of time. A press
release, to be frank, also guides the message toward a hoped for outcome. The blog simplifies self-publishing of the CC point of view in form of initiating press-release, or providing responses to media stories. It works like a de-facto official press office. As example, Anne Amato from CtPost recently contacted TomH regarding Farmers Market subject. Although she didn't quote me in the article, I created/provided an entry that summarized the subject. The Chairman has no personal interest in the virtual property's content or domain name, and it could be passed along to future chairman if they desired. No change needed in how that's used.

http://sheltonconservation.org/
TeresaG as Conservation Agent maintains this website and the pages within. While the City has it's own website and domain name, the CC obtained this one that was more direct and adaptable in presenting our content. Teresa mastered the webpage creation software, and both designed the layout and created the content for it. It has links to all the information you could be searching for regarding the Commission's efforts and purpose. Open Space Maps, Rules, and featured properties; Welcome page with what's new; passive recreation and farmland offerings in town, etc. The City's own website (cityofshelton.org) underwent a design change recently that was dramatic. The link on the City's master website page to "Conservation Commission" goes directly to this domain name. It is kept as the professional presentation of what we do. A City owned virtual property. No change needed in how that's used.

http://groups.google.com/group/sheltoncc/topics
When the Conservation Commission started using email messages routed through google groups, it took some adjustment, but we are all comfortable with it. Used for over 5yrs with little issues, that is our internal communications tool that satisfies intent of FOI. Content is a City owned virtual property. No change needed in how this is used.

http://sheltontrails.blogspot.com/
The is Teresa's "In the Field" blog. It is personally managed entries, sometimes relating to Shelton outdoor items, but occasionally beyond our locality. Informative, and usually with a botanical or wildlife slant to her personal photos taken when she is out enjoying and exploring local open space. Educational. Not speaking as the Conservation Agent, the blog is her own virtual property, not a city property.

http://sheltontrailscom.blogspot.com/
This blog is maintained by the Shelton Trails Committee. It is from this blog that the HuntHrld lifted / created a "letter to the editor". It is a casual content style, with several members of the committee able to create entries. Primarily informs about upcoming work parties, accomplishments, guided hikes, etc. Plenty of photos of families, volunteers, the occasional comic cartoon. As example, the entry on RecPath celebration in Sept had photos of Mayor reading proclamation, photos of Perkin Elmer and Basil Dikovsky receiving recognition, and the addition that nobody was hurt by debris from the falling NASA satellite (which was a news item that weekend). The blog is something maintained by the volunteer / enthusiasts, and is not the City's virtual property. No change needed in how that's used.

http://eklundgarden.blogspot.com/
This is a blog specific to aspects of the Eklund Native Species Garden on Oak Valley Road. Teresa maintains it. Mostly informative purposes. The blog is something maintained by the volunteer / enthusiasts, and is not the City's virtual property. No change needed in how that's used.

https://www.facebook.com/sheltontrailscom
This is the most productive communications tool, currently with over 600 people "liking" or following it. The interactivity of the "wall" of messages from the public, photos posted, events
mentioned - all create awareness. Also allows inter-promotion with other groups such as Farmers Market Association, Shelton Dog Park, Land Trust, etc. We need to tidy up who "owns" the virtual property domain (should be City of Shelton), and then who is responsible for managing it (should be ConsAgent). Currently functions well as informative resource. For instance, many people were turning to this facebook page with questions of the whitehouse being torn down near dog park. One point is that the amplification of a message can be quite loud via this service. If I share a post on my own wall to all my friends, it's like the telephone game where a message get's amplified quickly by being repeated and shared to broader spectrum.

The ConsComm does not maintain a youtube account, twitter account, google plus account, or picassa or flickr photo account. Teresa has used her personal youtube channel or picassa service to share videos or photos with us that she sees in the field for our review, but there is no need at this time to archive or publish that content and have such service under a "City" registration.

**G. Open Space Trust Account. Status**

No report.

**H. Budget Status**

Chairman Harbinson reported that he received a notice from Finance regarding the 2012-2013 budget. It is due January 16th. We will have to approve what our next year's budget will be at our next Conservation meeting. I will communicate via email a proposed budget and goals for next year. One thing that we have had every year is $50K budgeted for the Rec Path, but that is now largely been accomplished. We might now want to think about the maintenance of the Rec Path going forward plus other maintenance items we have talked about in the past.

**I. Open Space set-aside. Status of increase to 15% in subdivision regulations**

Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that P&Z said they would address this issue in January.

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

1. **Old Applications/Monitor/Follow-up**

None
2. New Applications (Applications received between agenda creation and our Regular Meeting may be amended to this Agenda at start of regular meetings by a vote from the Commission.)

None

K. Communications

- Thank you note from the Housatonic Valley Association for our annual donation of $100.

L. Quality of Life – Executive Session (land acquisition and security issues)

Vice-Chairman Dyer MOVED to go into Executive Session at 8:04 P.M. for the purposes of discussing possible land acquisitions. SECONDED by Commissioner Goodman.

At 8:04 P.M. the Commissioners returned to regular session.

Chairman Harbinson stated that there were no motions made in Executive Session.

M. Comments by members

Commissioner Dutkanicz said that someone asked her if we allowed hunting on open space. I know that in the Centennial Forest (part of the BHC property) they do allow the hunting by license. Chairman Harbinson clarified it by saying that according to the open space regulations no hunting is allowed in City Open Space. The Commissioners talked about various aspects of hunting.

Tape 1, Side B

Agent Gallagher stated that the next meeting for the Fairfield Deer Alliance is Monday at 10:30 A.M.

Commissioner McCreery said that the Land Trust group has a winter project to restore the Land Trust tractor. They are looking for donations if anyone has any paint supply sources. It’s a red top and grey bottom color combination.

Vice-Chairman Dyer said that they had someone doing community service that built a trail parallel to a pond off Nells Rock Rd. across from Abbey Wright. The trail goes around Basking Ridge and L’Hermitage.
N. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.
The next regular meeting is Wednesday, January 4, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Chaya
Clerk, Conservation Commission