City of Shelton Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes for
December 7, 2016

Members Present: Bill Dyer, Sheri Dutkanicz, Jim Tate, Tom Harbinson, Joe Welsh

Absent: Pat Gadjosik, Ed McCreery

Support: Terry Gallagher, Trails Committee

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Tom Harbinson.

2. Public Portion – for items not on the agenda: Karen Meyer, 77 Myrtle Street, said she has lived in Shelton for ten years. She heard about the proposed development at Wells Farm (“Towne Center at Shelter Ridge”), is really upset about it, and wanted to voice her opinion. Chairman Tom Harbinson described Conservation’s comments regarding the project to the Planning and Zoning Commission, which included a Powerpoint presentation at the public hearing. The letters were copied to the mayor and aldermen, so everyone is very aware of Conservation’s concerns. Jim Tate said that on this particular application, we were about as forceful as you can get. Bill Dyer said that Conservation Commission members also got up and spoke at the public hearing as individuals. Tom Harbinson noted that all of Conservation’s information pertaining to the proposal is readily available online. Ms. Meyer said she had concerns with traffic and all the trees being cut.

3. Meeting Minutes: Sheri Dutkanicz made a motion to approve the November 2, 2016 meeting minutes. Seconded by Jim Tate. All were in favor.

4. Trails Committee Report. Bill Dyer summarized the Trails Committee meeting that preceded the Conservation Commission meeting. Refer to the Trails Committee meeting minutes for more information.

Jim Tate asked Bill Dyer if there was any remaining desire to pave the Rec Path, since the original design was based on the Stowe Path, a paved trail. A lot of the original groundwork was based on the idea that it would eventually be paved. Ed McCreery stated that he really liked the fact that it’s not mostly paved. Jim Tate agreed with Ed, but thought that at some point they should decide that formally. Terry Gallagher
thought that the greater need for paving was for access links such a sidewalk between Pine Lake and downtown so that the high school kids aren’t walking in traffic. Jim Tate noted that it was a state highway. Terry Gallagher said a traffic safety audit was going to be performed this spring on the Shelton Avenue section and said the other important location was along Huntington Street from the former Huntington Street Café to the main shopping center. This has been discussed previously with the Street Committee. Jim Tate said we should keep that on our agenda and keep after them.

Tom Harbinson thought that if the public was asking for the Rec Path to be paved, that would be one thing, but he personally likes the look and feel of the natural stone aggregate through the woods. A paved path also has issues with icing up and additional runoff issues. Sheri Dutkanicz said the tree roots can also crack the pavement. Terry Gallagher said that what we are seeing a lot of people using the Rec Path, and maybe at some point we may need to widen the 8 foot sections to 12 feet. Tom Harbinson noted that they have trouble with the one paved portion near Meadow Street in the winter because water sheets across it and freezes, and we don’t have that issue with the gravel surface. Terry Gallagher responded that the paved section was the first section they did, and the drainage they had specified got removed to save money.

Jim Tate said it’s a matter of accessibility and maintenance. Tom Harbinson said if there was an ADA issue he could understand. Terry Gallagher mentioned that the handicapped ramps were never completed for the Meadow Street crossing. They may make a list of improvements that Trails recommends the City complete. Bill Dyer noted that the crushed stone surface is much better for runners and easier on people’s legs.

5. **Review of proposals before the Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands Commissions:**

   a) **Bridgeport Avenue Shelter Ridge Associates, LLC, P&Z #16-8, PDD Step #1 site plans, 122-acres bounded by Mill Street, Buddington Road, and Woodland Mobile Home Park, zoned Light Industrial.** Map 50 Lot 9. This was discussed previously during the public portion.

   b) **181 Meadow Street Resubdivision of Lot #1 PZC #16-33** into two lots. Tom Harbinson described the project as having an existing house on it with a barn in the back, and they are requesting a fee in lieu of open space dedication. Sheri Maybeck said she was familiar with the barn and noted that this was the original Sinsabaugh farmhouse. Jim Tate wondered if there was any chance the driveway for the new lot could come off of Sinsabaugh Heights rather than having the long driveway coming in from Meadow Street. Tom Harbinson wondered if there was a stone wall along Meadow Street in this location that would be interrupted with a new curb cut. There was a discussion about walls in that area.
**Bill Dyer made a motion to accept the fee in lieu of open space for the resubdivision at 181 Meadow Street. Sheri Dutkanicz seconded the motion.**

**Discussion:** The Commission members pulled up the site on Google Maps Street View. Tom Harbinson noted a break in the stone from the northwest corner of the farm house on Meadow Street, and then a rubble stone wall continues on from there (tape 1 side A ended). The committee discussed. **Vote was taken on the motion. All were in favor. Joe Welsh stepped out momentarily and did not vote.**

c) **PZC #16-28, replacement of PDD #66, Great River Water Club, 704-722 River Road, 8.6 acres.** (Former approved PDD in 2008 was called “Beacon Point Marina” for 31 condominiums, clubhouse with restaurant, bar, swimming pool, and marina for 200 boat slips.) Proposed modification is for 164 apartment units in five structures, clubhouse with pool, maintenance building, and marina all served by private septic systems.

Jim Tate asked if there was any public access to the river under this modified proposal. Tom Harbinson did not see any on the plans. There is a “crew dock” but there is no mention of access to the public or for emergency responders, which was part of the PDD approved in 2008. The City previously agreed to abandon the Murphys Lane right of way that lead down to the water from River Road in order to facilitate the 2008 PDD project.

Jim Tate asked about the sewage. Tom Harbinson reviewed the plans and said that each building appears to have an 8,000 gallon septic tank. The elevation is 28.8 feet. The plan seems to be to treat the sewage onsite and discharge to the river. Jim Tate felt there should be more detail and someone should come to a Conservation meeting to present the plans and explain how they are going to have public access to the river, how the sewage system will work and not impact the river, and how the project will impact visual corridor as viewed from the river.

Bill Dyer asked if there was already a public hearing. Tom Harbinson said he thought they did hold one hearing date already, with the hearing extended. It seems rather fast-track when the plans were dropped in Conservation’s lap on the date of our last meeting.

Jim Tate thought Conservation should delay any comments until the applicant has had a chance to present the project directly to this commission. He also wanted to know why the proposed PDD has a density that is so much higher than the originally approved PDD, increasing from 32 units to 164.

Tom Harbinson noted the original PDD included a small boat launch ramp for use at no charge for Shelton residents. The PDD also included a public access boardwalk with marine overlook gazebos at each end. And the clubhouse with restaurant, bar, and private dining room was to be open to the public with a swimming pool. Obviously this is a much different concept than what was
approved previously. Jim Tate noted we have limited coastal resources in
Shelton.

Ed McCreery said that unfortunately in this case, there is no immediate group
of neighbors to attend the Planning and Zoning hearings, and people aren’t
going to appreciate the impact on the river until construction begins and they
see how it’s ruining the river frontage. So he hoped Planning and Zoning will
do its job to protect the community because that’s an obscene development.

6. Proposed ATV ordinance to authorize Police enforcement including the
ability to confiscate ATVs and dirt bikes when ridden on City property.

Ed McCreery made a motion to support passage of the ordinance as
provided for potential seizure of offenders who decide to use the City’s
recreational trails for their motorized vehicle entertainment as evidenced
recently when a dirt bike rider was recorded riding on the Rec Path.
Seconded by Joe Welsh. All were in favor.

7. Communications:
   a  CACIWC newsletters received
   b  Correspondences between the Housatonic Boy Scout Council and Teresa
       Gallagher regarding an Eagle Scout project completed by David Leandres,
       Troop 55, at Eklund Garden.

8. Comments by Members:
   a  Sheri Dutkanicz: Spoke about former member’s Jim Goodman’s sister’s
       lung transplant.
   b  Bill Dyer: There is another project being developed by Royal Wells across
       the street from Shelter Ridge. There’s another apartment building, and a hotel
       on that 17-acre parcel at the corner of Long Hill Cross. The application has not
       official been submitted yet.
   c  Jim Tate: Attended an all-day state bikeway trail conference that was very
       interesting and in depth. His take away for Shelton is that the City is a little
unique in that the City does not fund all trail projects through the state and
federal government but also does its own funding. When you fund a project
through the state or federal government it’s usually a 20/80 share. The
interesting part about that is that when you have the state and federal
government involved, you raise the cost almost to the point where the 20%
cost share value is as high as funding the project locally without state and
federal oversight. The state and federal agencies add so many requirements
and the city loses control of the project. The mayor in Shelton understands
that. Also, some of these bike trails have revolutionized downtown areas and
have brought in more dollars than the construction costs. Bill Dyer noted that
we did have some 20/80 grants to build the Rec Path. Jim Tate agreed, and
said grants were also used for the River Walk. However, Shelton also funds
some projects locally.
Ed McCreery: Three items. 1. The Chamber of Commerce had a very successful event and used the opportunity to speak with Mr. Grimmer and remind him of our interest in the canal locks. They will be getting together for lunch. Mr. Grimmer indicated that they are applying for historic status for the Star Pin building and he wants to talk about that. 2. He was also approached by Dr. Clouet, the new Superintendent of Schools, and when he mentioned he was on the Conservation Commission and Land Trust board, Dr. Clouet said we should get together to talk about how the students can become more involved in the two organizations. 3. He would like to see a pedestrian suspension bridge over the Far Mill River with parking on Huntington Street opposite Maple Lane to link up the Rec Path to the Huntington Street sidewalks. The problem is you wouldn’t see it from Huntington Street. Bill Dyer said they’ve spoken about this previously. There used be a bridge there but it was washed out.

Joe Welsh: He has been thinking about branching out with the school system. He’s currently working with Deb Tucker, there is an outdoor classroom at Perry Hill School and they were looking for parents to help. Somehow there’s a disconnect. In the grade schools there are fathers clubs and a lot of parental involvement, but the kids move on and it all falls by the wayside. Ms. Tucker is trying to get more parent involvement to help with the outdoor classroom and Joe offered to help. They are trying to set up a meeting with the Olde Ripton Garden Club. Maybe they can plant the City flower there. He has also spoken with Dr. Clouet and the staff at Mohegan School about a possible vegetable garden there.

Tom Harbinson: Went to a presentation called “Clearly Derby” that had many people there with wide range of ideas. The one that resonated most was by a gentleman from Asheville, North Carolina, who made a presentation that advocated for downtown development because it has the highest tax revenue on a per square foot basis. He took the grand list and overlaid that onto a 3d map so each parcel had its tax revenue per acre, and he did Shelton as well. His claim, backed up by data, was that the development downtown was more economically viable on a square footage basis that something like Walmart. Ed McCreery said the fallacy of his argument is that he’s only looking at revenues, not expenditures, because Walmart doesn’t send any kids to the school system. Tom Harbinson said he brought that up. But it was very interesting was how the presentation was done and how the maps communicated his idea.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Meeting minutes were prepared by Teresa Gallagher and should be considered in draft form until adopted at the next meeting. Audio tapes of the meeting are on file in the Town Clerk’s office.