

**City of Shelton  
Conservation Commission**

Meeting Minutes for  
December 2, 2015



**Members Present:** Tom Harbinson, Pat Gajdosik, Ed McCreery, Jim Tate, Joe Welsh, Sheri Dutkanicz

**Absent:** Bill Dyer

**Also present:** Teresa Gallagher, Natural Resource Manager; Terrance Gallagher, Trails Committee.

1. **The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm.**
2. **Meeting Minutes:** Ed McCreery made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes. Seconded by Pat Gajdosik. All were in favor.
3. **Public Portion** – No one from the public attended the meeting.
4. **Trails Committee Report:** Terrance Gallagher summarized the Trails Committee meeting that immediately preceded the Conservation Commission meeting, as described in the Trails Committee meeting minutes.
5. **Budget Status:** Nothing to report
6. **Review of proposals before the Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands Commissions:** There were no new applications to review and no updates on previous applications.
7. **Proposal for Stars and Stripes, Inc. Aquaponics Fish Farm:** Representatives of this corporation have met with the Mayor and are requesting that Shelton lease property to them for an indoor fish farm. Teresa distributed a packet that included the written proposal, some background on the corporation found online, and one possible location for the facility: the west side of Meadow Street opposite Wheeler Ave., below the EMS facility (BOE property).

The facility would consist of a warehouse 200'x 50' with parking for 20 cars. The corporation is for profit, but say they would employ employee veterans and have an educational component. The aquaponics system would be a closed system in which plants remove nutrients from the water, allowing it to be reused for the fish.

Tom Harbinson noted that Conservation is not being asked for an opinion of the project at this time, but he wanted the Commission to be aware of the project.

Jim Tate said that he happened to be in the Mayor's office about a month ago when the company representative came in. Jim thought the concept and goals of the venture were good, but was concerned about what would happen if the facility was constructed and then went bankrupt. He recently read an article about a similar project in Pennsylvania that did so. If the city leases the property, the contract should be structured such that if the corporation goes bankrupt, the City retains ownership of the building.

Ed McCreery spoke about a similar project in Virginia that also went bankrupt after the state committed millions of dollars to it with the goal of providing employment opportunities to the region. Many of the same market studies were cited and promises made as this current proposal in Shelton, but the venture only lasted about two years.

Jim Tate noted that past problems included a lack of fish processing facilities, but the Bridgeport Aquaculture School has such facilities that are underutilized. He has no problem if the city leases the property, but city land should not be sold.

Jim also stressed that any project for which the city leases out property should only be done if the project is in the Public Interest. It can be commercial, but there must be a benefit to the public, in this case an educational component. Teresa noted that the haying operations on city property are commercial, but do provide a public service (e.g. keeping local farms in business).

Tom Harbinson asked if there was a conflict with putting this type of structure in an R-1 zone. There is already a Police Station, EMS, and school, but no homes nearby. Teresa said she had been asked by the Mayor to identify potential city-owned sites, and most open space parcels were immediately ruled out because there were homes nearby. The site on Meadow Street was chosen because of the lack of homes, the presence of existing institutional structures, the proximity to the Intermediate and High School, and also because the land is not classified as open space on the maps, which can be deed restricted.

#### 8. **Open Space Report** - Natural Resources Manager Teresa Gallagher

- **Cam Family Research:** The location of three Cam Family (early free Black/Native American) properties have been located, all at least partly on City open space: The George Cam homestead on Shelton Avenue (1790); the Cam woodlot at 10 Oak Valley Road (now Eklund Garden, purchased in 1795); and 15 acres of land between Kneen Street and Long Hill Avenue, including a portion of Constitution Park (first purchase in 1802). James Gage ([stonestructures.org](http://stonestructures.org)) has been particularly helpful. Dr. Lucianne Lavine from the Institute of American Indian Studies in Washington, CT is planning on showing the homestead ruins to some researchers working on the Freeman site in Derby. A possible location of Archibald Cam's dwelling was recently located. Teresa is in the process of documenting the vital records and land deeds that have been found.
- **Birchbank Mountain:** An article for the next issue of Shelton Life was drafted.

#### **Ad-hoc Committee Reports** – Natural Resources Manager Teresa Gallagher

- **Community Gardens:** A fall-cleanup work party for Eklund Garden was held, and an Eagle Scout project has been lined up at Eklund.
- **Anti-Litter Committee** – An email was send out to all the Adopt-a-Street participants regarding future articles featuring their business, but no responses have been received. The Committee needs additional members, with some members having dropped out or moved and others having health issues.
- **Deer Committee:** Continuing to wait for the Board of Aldermen to act on the report that was submitted to them from the Deer Committee.

## 9. Comments by Members

- Sheri Dutkanicz described a meeting of the Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership that she and Teresa attended in Redding.
- Teresa repeated a comment made by Michael Clemens at the CACIWC Conference regarding the review of proposed developments: It's not the job of Conservation Commissions to provide balance. That's the job of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Conservation's job is to advocate for the environment.

## 12. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm

*Minutes were prepared by Teresa Gallagher and should be considered a draft until approved by the Conservation Committee.*