



## City of Shelton Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes for  
November 2, 2016

**Members Present:** Bill Dyer, Pat Gajdosik, Sheri Dutkanicz, Jim Tate, Tom Harbinson, Ed McCreery (arrived at 7:22 p.m.), Teresa Gallagher (staff)

**Absent:** Joe Welsh

1. **The meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm by Tom Harbinson.**
2. **Meeting Minutes: Jim Tate made a motion to approve the October 5, 2016 meeting minutes. Seconded by Pat Gajdosik. All were in favor.**
3. **Public Portion – for items not on the agenda:** No one wished to address the Commission at this time.
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.
5. **Review of proposals before the Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands Commissions:**

**Bill Dyer made a motion to add PDD#66 Great River Water Club to the agenda, which was received after the agenda was published. Jim Tate seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

- 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. Teresa Gallagher reported that a vote is not expected until early January.
- b) **Shelton Family Farm, Leavenworth Road near Walnut Tree Hill Road (old go-cart track), free split impacting agricultural easement.** Surveyor Tracey Lewis presented the proposed split on behalf of Cindy and Ryan Pane, the daughter and son-in-law of the property owner, who plan to build a home for

themselves. Mr. Lewis explained that the owner always planned to split off two lots for her children, and excluded this area from the agricultural easement. However, in configuring the lots, it was found that due to the topography, a small piece of the agricultural easement would need to be included in one of the lots in order to meet the zoning setback.

*Ed McCreery arrived at 7:22 p.m.* Teresa Gallagher noted that she prepares the annual inspection reports that are required by state and federal agencies under the conditions of a grant that was awarded to the City to purchase the easement. The inspection requirements have become complicated and require contacting each owner of the easement to discuss any problems or future plans for the easement area. If a portion of the easement is located on a second property, this will entail contacting two sets of owners each year in perpetuity. Further, allowing a portion of the agricultural easement to be included in a building lot may jeopardize future grants. She would rather that ZBA granted a zoning variance for the setback in order to keep the agricultural easement intact.

Tracey Lewis indicated that they would like to expedite the project and obtaining a variance would take more time. Also, the variance could be denied.

Jim Tate recommended adjusting the boundaries of the agricultural easement so that the total acreage of the easement area remained the same. Ed McCreery countered that this would require state and BOA approval, which would take longer.

**Ed McCreery made a motion for Teresa Gallagher to draft a letter on behalf of the Conservation Commission to ZBA supporting a variance in order to preserve the integrity of the agricultural easement. Bill Dyer seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

- c) **PZC #16-28, modification of PDD #66, Great River Water Club, 122 River Road.** (Formerly called Beacon Point Marina, PDD approved in 2008 for 31 condominiums, clubhouse with restaurant, bar, swimming pool, and marina for 200 boat slips.) Bill Dyer noted the plans were referred to Conservation today. The applicant proposes to modify the approved PDD for 164 apartment units, clubhouse, pool and marina. Stratford will not accept the sewage, so the applicant is showing onsite septic.

Tom Harbinson stressed that the project is a “big deal.” Jim Tate asked the commission members to digest the plans for discussion at the December meeting.

- d) **PZC #15-25, 185 East Village Road, 9-lot subdivision, review of conservation easement language.** Commission members were satisfied with the easement language.

**6. Open Space Forest Management: Introduction of basic management concepts for enhancement of wildlife habitat and recreation, including forest management plans, canopy thinning, and deer control.** Teresa Gallagher prefaced by stating she is not proposing any action at this time, which would be premature, but wanted to ensure Commission members were aware of modern concepts of forest management.

The 1950's view was that hunting and fires were "bad" and a hands-off policy was recommended for conservation areas. This did not work because humans had eliminated major predators and fires, leading to critical imbalances. There were starving deer, reduced diversity, and loss of the understory. The modern view is that forests should be managed.

Ideally, a Forest Management Plan is drafted. The plan includes:

- a** The goals or purpose of the forest (e.g. wildlife habitat, watershed protection, recreation) and what resources are available for management
- b** Description & maps
- c** Problems identified (e.g. trees not regenerating)
- d** Tasks to be done (e.g. thin the canopy, implement deer control)

A plan can cover smaller or larger areas. In Shelton, the deer management plan that was written a few years ago states that bow hunting on select open space properties, combined with thinning of the canopy, would lead to forest regeneration. If and when deer control is implemented, it would make sense to draft basic plans for the parcels on which hunting is allowed.

Teresa Gallagher handed out copies of a Forest Management Plan prepared by DEEP's Forestry Division for the Means Brook tract of Centennial State Watershed Forest. DEEP has foresters on staff and therefore the plan is more detailed and involved than a typical plan, but it provides an invaluable assessment of the health of the forest in Shelton. In particular, the plan notes a lack of diversity, with most of the forest consisting of mature trees vulnerable to major hurricanes. The lack of early successional forest as well as the overbrowsed understory has led to the loss of species such as ruffed grouse, and the trees are not regenerating.

**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.*