

Received: August 13, 2009
Office of the Town Clerk

TOWN OF DURHAM
Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 11, 2009

Casey Cordes at the Durham Public Library called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Members Present: Ralph Chase, Casey Cordes, Joe Dattilo, Rick Huntley, Bill LaFlamme, Bob Melvin

Call to Order/Roll Call: Members present introduced themselves to the audience in attendance.

Approval of Minutes from July Regular Meeting: Ralph Chase, seconded by Bill LaFlamme to approve the July 14, 2009 minutes as distributed, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from July 18, 2009 and August 8, 2009 Special Meetings: July 18 minutes not available so table until the September meeting. Only two members attended the August 8 meeting, so no minutes required.

Amendments to Agenda / Approval of August Agenda: Ralph Chase, seconded by Joe Dattilo to approve the agenda as distributed, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Session: None

Curtis Woodlands Eagle Scout Project Update and Q&A – Sheehan Michael: Sheehan reported that the trails are marked, most of the Russian olive is cut and brush piles need to be burned. He is requesting mowing of the field so that he can get the brush piles centralized for the Fire Department to burn. If necessary, Sheehan will rent a brush mower and do the mowing. Joe Dattilo, seconded by Bill LaFlamme to authorize reimbursement to Sheehan Michael for the rental of a brush mower, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Elisabeth Moore, Connecticut Farmland Preservation Trust Re: Scott Property, Maiden Ln: Ms. Moore presented the benefits in preserving the Scott Farm of 42 acres with a conservation easement. The conservation easement permanently restricts residential and non-farm commercial development of the property and permits all agricultural uses. It costs significantly less to provide public services to farmland than residential development. Mr. Scott is offering public access to the property. Ms. Moore requested to partner with the Town of Durham in the preservation of this property by reimbursing Mr. Scott for his costs associated with the donation of the conservation easement. The estimated costs are \$12,000 - \$19,000. The Connecticut Farmland Preservation Trust has been in existence for 7 years. They have easements on 18 different farms totaling 1600 acres. They have easements in every county except for Fairfield County. Mr. Scott was present and made a few comments. Deb Hoyt asked about the maintenance of the property. Ms. Moore replied that the Scott property is not publically owned so that maintenance is the responsibility of the private owner. Ralph Chase, seconded by Bob Melvin to authorize Casey Cordes to request funds from the Town to cover the costs associated with the donation of a conservation easement from the Conservation Commission's reserve account, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

White's Farm Way Forward & Work Day Scheduling: There was discussion about what actions to take now while a long-term maintenance plan is developed. Dick Porter has offered his sickle bar to mow the vegetation in the drainage ditches to help with water flow. It was suggested cutting back the overgrown vegetation along the fence by the bridge on Maple Avenue. There was discussion about the Mill Pond dam and recreating the stream channel and a sedimentation basin. John Mitchell of the Durham Fair Association offered the use of any equipment they have that can help. Two workdays are scheduled for White's Farm, August 22 and August 29, 2009. The first date will take care of the roadside clearing and the Town nursery. The second date will be to mow the ditches provided approval from the Durham Inland Wetlands Commission has been obtained. The consensus of those present was to do something now, even if it is small to start. Casey asked those present what is the best way to keep the community involved and informed. One idea was to form a "Friends of White Farm" group. The suggestion was to have that group as a specific topic on the Town's GovCast web feature. Then anyone interested could sign up on the web site to have postings under that topic sent to their email account. Casey will look into get that setup.

Site Development Plan Review – Regional District 13 Athletic Field Renovations: There was concern about the size of the conservation easement area. It was brought to the attention of the Commission by Trish Dynia that the Inland Wetlands Commission expanded the conservation easement area. Casey is concerned about post development run-off. There is quite a bit of impervious surface being added. Ralph Chase, seconded by Bill LaFlamme, to recommend to the Planning & Zoning Commission to use permeable asphalt wherever feasible to increase the area available for water infiltration, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Site Development Plan Review – Tilcon Inc. Renewal of Excavation & Removal Permit: The Commission has not comment on this plan.

2009 Hunting Lottery – Schedule & Status & Discussion: The deadline to submit applications is August 21, 2009. The lottery will be conducted on August 25, 2009 at 6PM. The permits will be executed at the September meeting. Casey opened discussion on considering adding Pisgah/Cream Pot to the lottery. The area is heavily used by hikers and is narrow for the 500-foot setback from dwellings. Consensus of the Commission is that the area is not suitable for hunting.

Tenant Updates for Howd Road and Pent Road Open Space: The Chella Bros. needed to submit an updated auto insurance certificate to the Town Hall. Melynda Naples signed the lease extension agreement and has made the negotiated payments. The Town Facilities Manager, Dick McManus, has been looking at the barn. He indicated that a bathroom should be installed. Melynda expressed concern over the amount of run-off that comes off Pent and Tri-Mountain Road and runs through the pasture. Casey will bring the situation to Kurt Bober's attention.

Open Space Issues Reports/Updates: Curtis Woodlands; Pent Road; Howd Road; Creampot Valley; White's Farm: Joe Dattilo reported that the Town is willing to take the parcel of land on Route 68 in lieu of back taxes. Discussion ensued. Joe Dattilo, seconded by Bill LaFlamme, to recommend that the Town of Durham acquire the parcel on map #37 lot #4 in lieu of back taxes from Community Development Services, Inc. if the Town saves money in doing so, made a motion. The motion passed with Ralph Chase in opposition.

Open forum with Property Stewards – Whites Farm – Jack Stahl; Pent Road (Deerfield Farm) – Melynda Naples; Howd Road – Matt Reed; Pisgah Mountain - Andy Golschneider with Venture Crew 169; Jim Smigal with BSA Troop 27 and Christina Costas; Creampot Valley – George & Irene Roberts; Curtis Woodlands – Rob Williams & Mark Smalley; Portion of Wimler Property with Public Access – Dick Porter; and Sawmill Road – Ray Koba: George and Irene Roberts were present and reported that there is still ATV use on the property. The Conservation Officer for our area, Bill Myers, retired. His last day is September 8, 2009. Joe Ruggiero is the Conservation Officer to contact after September 8. Dick Porter was present, but nothing to report.

Payment of Bills: Ralph Chase, seconded by Bob Melvin to approve the payment of bills as presented: \$16.19 to Sheehan Michael for spray paint used to mark trail network at Curtis Woodlands and \$60.00 to Pam Huntley for secretarial services, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Report – New Business – Budget & Accounts Update; Old Business - Tree Warden's ATB Tree Planting Grant Progress; Markers for Memorial Tree Plantings; Correspondence – Update of a Contact List for Committee Members: The Commission has a budget of \$6,600 for FY2010. Casey reported that the ATB trees would be planted on the Howd Road property. Casey will give Chris Donnelly of the DEP Urban Forestry Program information to make a request to change the venue of the grant and to request an extension to use the grant money. Tentatively next Arbor Day we will have a joint celebration with the Tree Warden at Howd Road and plant one of the 20 trees.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Huntley
Recording Secretary