



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2016, 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT**

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Vice Chairman David Bidwell, James Gage, Robert Zielfelder, Jr., George Nickerson, and Alternate-Ann Harford

ABSENT: Sean Dwyer and Alternate Walter Moody

STAFF: Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner and Troy M. Ciesco, Recording Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the May 3, 2016 regular meeting of the Conservation Commission to order at 7:03 PM.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items): NONE

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Open space recommendation for S201602 – Henry Aberle, Jr. Estate, owner/applicant, for a 13-lot subdivision known as Aberle Farm Estates on property located at 175 Mountain Street, APN 047-035-0000 in an R (Residential) Zone.

Rachel Dearborn of Landmark Surveys was present to represent the application. She stated that the application is for a 13-lot subdivision and described the current conditions of the area. She then explained that the developer is proposing to provide a conservation easement for agricultural use only in order to satisfy the open space requirement. She noted that this would not be for public access. Commissioner Bidwell asked if the property was close to the Batz Property. Ms. Dearborn explained that it is rather far away, and also pointed out that this proposal would create a three acre parcel which the town would not have to maintain.

The commission, staff, and the applicant discussed the history and layout of the property and past practice on allowing agricultural easements to satisfy the open space requirement. Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner, stated that staff will research past subdivisions and the applicant agreed to return to the next regular meeting to further discuss the proposal.

BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION AGREED TO TABLE CONSIDERATION OF THE OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATION TO THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING FOR S201602 – Henry Aberle, Jr. Estate, owner/applicant, for a 13-lot subdivision

known as Aberle Farm Estates on property located at 175 Mountain Street, APN 047-035-0000 in an R (Residential) Zone.

2. Discussion - Energize Connecticut Initiative
 - a. 2015 Clean Energy Community Progress Report – Ellington

Ms. Houlihan noted that the solar project for the Middle School, Center Elementary School, and Crystal Lake Elementary School has been approved.

Ms. Houlihan explained that the financial climate in the state has taken the focus of the Board of Selectmen this budget season and will likely make it difficult to create a Clean Energy Task Force in the near future. She further explained that the commission can still address certain energy initiatives in the meantime, and noted that the Director of Public Works has already been working with Eversource to benchmark town facilities.

Commissioner Bidwell pointed out that they can establish goals and work to create a better picture of the direction of the project. Chairwoman Quarno also noted that this is a good time to leverage the interest of other parties.

The commission and staff discussed options for advertising energy initiatives to the general public, which included a discussion of securing a spot at the Ellington Farmer's Market. It was generally agreed that a meeting with a representative of Energize CT will be helpful to further discuss options.

NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS

3. Discussion – Open Space Ongoing Education
 - a. Open Space Brochure

Troy Ciesco, Land Use Technician, presented the Open Space Brochure and the Farmland Preservation Brochure and requested final feedback before copies are produced for the public. The commission offered some comments and Mr. Ciesco noted that he would make the appropriate changes and print a small batch of each brochure to get feedback from the public.

NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS

4. Update – Hockanum River Trail Association: Ann Harford – Lead

Commissioner Harford noted that some of the signs on the West Road Trail have been installed by an Eagle Scout candidate and that there are still some signs to install. She also cautioned that Japanese knotweed is starting to grow rapidly along the river and discussed further maintenance conducted by the group. Commissioner Harford noted that more volunteers are sorely needed.

Discussion ensued.

NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS

5. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program: James Gage/Staff – Leads

Ms. Houlihan stated that three applications for farmland preservation are still pending. Commissioner Gage recounted a discussion with the Lebanon Town Planner regarding farmland preservation protocols with the state.

Discussion ensued regarding the direction and funding sources of the Farmland Preservation Program.

NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS

6. Report - Open Space Preservation Program: James Gage - Lead

Commissioner Gage stated that there are no properties currently under consideration. He mentioned that the Northern Connecticut Land Trust (NCLT) is currently negotiating for a piece in the eastern panhandle which contains a pond and that NCLT would likely approach the town for assistance with the purchase. He noted that NCLT would maintain the property.

NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY15-16 Budget Expenditure Update: Staff – Lead

Ms. Houlihan reviewed the status of the budget with the commission and noted that Mr. Ciesco has prepared the CT DEEP Recreational Trail Program Final Report in order to request reimbursement from the state for the construction of the new bridge on the Hockanum River Trail.

NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS

2. Approval of the March 1, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (BIDWELL), SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED (NICKERSON, HARFORD ABSTAINED) to approve the March 1, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes as written.

3. Correspondence: NONE

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (HARFORD), SECONDED (BIDWELL) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted:


Troy M. Ciesco, Recording Clerk