

**TOWN OF TRUMBULL
CONNECTICUT**



Trumbull Conservation Commission Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, March 30, 2022
7:00 pm

Present: Chairman Mary Ellen Lemay, Commissioners Matthew Sulzicki, Sara Sterling, Pam Roman, Richard Post, Tim Coughlin and John Massari

Also Present: Richard White, Land Acquisition Committee; Mary Isaac, Sustainable Trumbull; Janet Epstein

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lemay at 7:04 pm.

Past Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. Post to approve the minutes of February 23, 2022 as written. Seconded by Mr. Coughlin and approved with abstention from Mr. Massari.

Special Guests

Mrs. Lemay introduced Mary Isaac from Sustainable Trumbull and Richard White from the Land Acquisition Committee. She noted Mr. White was an integral part of the development of the current GIS in town and worked as an advisor to the Conservation Commission on the project.

Mr. White noted he is concerned about the recently purchased Hardy Lane property. He has been making statements to L&A, the Town Council and Planning and Zoning and felt he should reach out to the Conservation Commission. He is currently emailing Planning & Zoning bringing up a suggestion that was made several years ago to repeal Section 2-4 of the Trumbull Municipal Code. This section is titled "Town Owned Property is Exempt from Zoning Commission Regulation". The town is exempt from any and all regulations prescribed by the Zoning Commission and the Town. There are still State and Federal processes that the Town would have to go through to develop any property but now what they put forth to Planning & Zoning is almost advisory. Repeal of the section would put any proposed property on the level with other property owners. It covers only Planning & Zoning, not IWWC, in these matters.

Mr. White spoke on the technical aspect of the property. There are multiple properties in this parcel with a small amount of wetlands and a watercourse. He was uncertain if a wetlands survey had been conducted. He was interested to know if the Conservation Commission could bring some of the layers from the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) into the GIS. Currently, with it not being

in a web-mapping environment, it is difficult to see what the POCD recommends. This inclusion would allow the residents to bring up maps that highlight the POCD. An update to the POCD will be done shortly and it would be easy to recommend the writer include a recommendation to publish the information in the document to the GIS. He noted there is significant slope on the back side of the property. He understands this is one of the possible sites for future development and would hope the town would give consideration to the wetlands and the watercourse on the parcel. He also discussed proposed parking on the property noting 200 spaces may not be appropriate with regards to the amount and type of pavement as well as run-off. He feels the town should have a community center, an aquatics facility and senior center but he is concerned about this property because of its connection to the Pequonnock, the steep slope and the drainage from the property.

Discussion was held regarding the Conservation Commission's stand on projects such as this and the roofs being replaced on some of the schools. Would the Commission take the opportunity to improve the operational efficiency of these buildings in the long run and do the right thing for conservation.

He showed some of the technologies available that might want to be considered. Questioned if the Conservation Commission would be recommending more than a Phase I site assessment of this property if there is significant development on it, or anywhere in town. He hopes the town is careful with the property since it connects directly to the Pequonnock. Contamination and erosion should be concerns with any development. Mrs. Lemay questioned if there was a deed to preserve it as open space when it was purchased because it is adjacent to the Pequonnock River Valley. Specifics were unknown other than a general reason to protect it from high density development of any kind.

Discussion was held regarding the use of the property as part of the trail system. The steep slope presents a problem with this consideration. Tree clearing and erosion may be a problem also. Mrs. Lemay noted the Natural Resource Inventory showed tree clearing along the top of the ridge line/slope on property similar to the Hardy Lane parcel with significant erosion in that area. She noted they are trying to update the Zoning regulations to include riparian protection for developments. This is a perfect example of a riparian area and a sensitive watershed area. The Hardy Lane parcel and the Trumbull Center building plan, which has the project within 25 feet of the Pequonnock River, are not acceptable today because of the changes in precipitation and the volume of water in the area. Traffic concerns and pedestrian sidewalks were discussed.

Mrs. Lemay questioned who she should contact regarding these concerns and should she wait until there are more details on the project. Mr. White likes the idea of putting town building projects under Planning & Zoning. The proposal a few years ago to remove that section from the Municipal Code was the right thing to do. The Conservation Commission could show the developers how to do things correctly. With its proximity to the Pequonnock and steep slope landscape, it allows the Conservation Commission to weigh in. Other uses for the property were discussed including splitting the parcel and selling it with deed restrictions, giving the steep slope to the State as part of the Pequonnock River Valley, using it as a Nature Center but connectivity to the trail is not feasible. It was questioned who has legal control over the properties; the town would have this control.

Mr. Massari spoke on pollution with the watercourse that runs through the area into the Pequonnock River. The State has looked into the orange water that occurs after it runs through the town maintenance area and have found it to be an iron bacteria.

Mrs. Lemay thought it was a concern that town projects do not fall under the watchful eye that other projects do in town. She noted the Commission will discuss this as a general recommendation for the Municipal Code and requested language/bullet points they could use to incorporate in the statement.

Mrs. Isaac noted nothing has been decided on the Hardy Lane parcel as far as its use. It is 25-26 acres with only 11 buildable. The center being proposed is approximately 6 acres. All concerns are important to note including the possibility of high-density construction. She felt that all of the committees need to work together to make sure whatever happens is best for the town and that it doesn't impede environmental concerns. Please bring any concerns or thoughts to the various building committees. She was concerned about the orange water and will contact Mr. Estrada regarding this. Mrs. Lemay will ask the Town to restart the water testing in the Pequonnock River to define hot spots.

New Business

1. Letter to Planning and Zoning Regarding Zoning Upgrades – Mrs. Lemay noted the letter was sent to Rob Librandi, the Town Planner, asking to be on the Planning & Zoning agenda for their next meeting to discuss State Law 21-29 and recommendations for changes in the Zoning regs. At least half of the narratives have been written and are currently in the proposed regulations that have not been approved. She would like to have the recommendations approved and added to the regs. Mr. Silber felt the changes would be voted on and added to the specific Zoning regulations.

Mrs. Lemay shared the letter with a new director at METROCOG (Council of Government which includes Fairfield, Easton, Trumbull, Bridgeport, Stratford and Monroe) and will have a meeting with her and others to talk specifically about this new law and the need for assistance from the Council to have it included in all the towns' regulations they oversee.

Enforcement was discussed. No enforcement is really a violation of the public trust. Residents are trusting the land-use boards to do their job and oversee developments and applications that come in to them and expect them to follow Inland Wetlands and Zoning laws. With these new regulations, it will give a better basis for controlling development in some ways. Discussion was held regarding the housing development on Daniels Farm Road regarding compliance with regulations. Mrs. Sterling questioned, if this is the moment to work with Planning & Zoning and bring these pieces in, should the Commission take advantage of this to put in penalties on the requirements. It was noted that, with the developer's bond with the town, money is held to make sure the developer meets the parameters of the town engineers. Mrs. Isaac noted this may be the opportunity to put Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commission back into the mix and have oversight in a proactive way. Ms. Epstein spoke on the experience with a Pinewood Lake resident who was in violation.

2. Town Survey – Mrs. Sterling noted the survey will be released on April 1. Information has been distributed through many venues including posters in various locations in the park system, links on social media through the Conservation Commission, Sustainable Trumbull and town website. Articles have been written for the Trumbull Times and the Patch. Various members of the Commission and community will be posting on social media to other town groups. The survey will be available for two weeks. After that time, Mrs. Sterling will review and present the results including some interesting facts. Thank you to Mr. Massari for printing the posters.

3. Native Plant Recommendations for Trumbull – Mrs. Roman reviewed the updated document which included recommendations from last month’s meeting. Mrs. Lemay would like to share this document with Inland Wetlands and integrate it into the Zoning regulations for the landscape designs that are presented with the applications. This document will be on the website of the Conservation Commission and Sustainable CT. It was also suggested a printed copy or a QR code be available at point of purchases to help with making decisions when individuals are at the nursery. Recommendations were discussed with regard to a fourth page which would be necessary, if printed. It was also suggested to be included with permit applications for reference.
4. A Thousand Trees for Trumbull w/Sustainable Trumbull Team – Mrs. Lemay noted she is working with Sustainable Trumbull on outreach with the brochure. Final edits are being made. She requested \$3,000 in her town budget for next fiscal year. During her budget review, discussion was held regarding a tree replacement program in town (part of the Tree Management Plan written by the Commission) and what type of budget would be required. A \$10,000 budget was proposed and forwarded to the Board of Finance and Town Council for approval. Lengthy discussion was held regarding the program including who would be responsible for planting and after care for one year (town employees, volunteers, separate entity set up), where would they be planted and how to make that decision and prioritization of plantings. Mr. Coughlin noted an operational plan needs to be developed which would include all aspects of the project. The amount of trees available to plant would depend on the above listed aspects of the program as it could cost approximately \$400-\$500 per tree.

Mrs. Lemay spoke on the Tree City USA designation and how the implementation of the Tree Management Plan would help to secure this designation. The State Forester has been contacted who will help with this designation during the year.

5. Sustainable CT will be presenting a program at Middlebrook Elementary School for the fifth graders on trees. This includes Ryan Romeo who has put together a power point on the importance of trees. The Bartlett Tree Company will also be included and has donated 100 trees to be given away that day.
6. The community garden expansion project is being tabled at this time. Trumbull residents need to be engaged in the project for it to work. Sustainable Trumbull is meeting with the First Selectman to discuss this expansion and the possibility of touring the Westport gardens.
7. Ms. Epstein indicated, if the Conservation Commission would like to use her grant contribution and partner with Sustainable CT, she can give a year’s worth of trees in value. The Nature Center would be the holder of the grant. The trees purchased could be held at the Nature Center where there are individuals who can take care of them until they are planted. There needs to be outside donations which would also raise public awareness of the program.
8. Mrs. Lemay shared upcoming events with the Commission including a program on April 8 presented by Mrs. Roman regarding invasive removal and restoration.

Old Business

1. Updates on IWWC Applications – Mr. Post noted there were no concerns with the two applications in question.

2. Pollinator Pathway – no further report.

Next Meeting

The next Commission meeting will be Wednesday, April 27, 2022.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was adjourned by unanimous consent at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall
Clerk