

Town of Canaan
Inland Wetlands/Conservation Commission
Minutes of Special Meeting
January 22, 2024

Members Present: Mark Burdick, Brant Burz, Susan Kelsey, Ellery Sinclair, Marleen VanGulick (alternate)
Others Present: Kneeland Munson, John Allen

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Burdick at 7:03 p.m. Minutes of December 18, 2023 were reviewed. Sinclair made a motion to approve minutes as presented; seconded by Burdick; passed unanimously.

Public Input: none.

Old Business:

1. Housatonic River Working Group: Sinclair reported that the Working Group held a zoom meeting with State Senator Stephen Harding. He is supportive of the Group's advocacy of enacting regulations pertinent to the use of herbicides by the railroad. He suggested the Group reach out to Selectmen, requesting that they reach out to Housatonic Railroad and encourage them to engage in conversation with the Working Group. Bruce Bennett of the Working group is drafting said letter to the Selectmen.

2. Forestry Advisory Group

A. Community Fuelwood Update: none

B. Urban Forest Equity Grant: Notice was received from the CT Tree Protective Association of a grant to provide funding in urban disadvantaged communities to encourage equitable access to trees and the benefits they provide. Consensus was that this grant was not applicable to our town.

3. Flaton/Lancto Property Development, 166 Undermountain Road: Kelsey reported she had inspected the site and that it appeared erosion control measures were functioning well, but noted an area that might benefit from additional fencing and/or hay bales. She notified Lancto and he will address any issues when he returns to the area after Christmas holidays. Sinclair has been working closely with Flaton, who has expressed an interest in preserving a large portion of the property (approximately 66 acres) with the Connecticut Farmland Trust, as well as making a boundary line adjustment with an abutting owner; said adjustment would result in only one residence being built on the former Holcomb property. Commission members thanked Sinclair for his efforts in facilitating the preservation of Wangum Valley.

4. Coolidge Beebe Hill Property: Burdick reported that Tim and Kate Kinsella met with Elizabeth Moore of the Connecticut Farmland Trust who informed them that monies are available for the purchase of development rights on agricultural lands through the CT Dept. of Agriculture. In order for this to happen, the property would need to be purchased from the current owner and then the new owner would negotiate with the State the sale of development rights. Conversations among several adjoining property owners have occurred with the Kinsellas and Mark Burdick. Burdick sent a letter to owners of an adjoining parcel informing them of the pending plan for subdivision of the Coolidge parcel and a phone call with those owners is pending. Burdick received an inquiry call from Shamu Sadeh of Camp Freedman seeking information regarding the pending subdivision.

Moore suggested that an appraisal be sought for the property; there is a possibility that their Board might obtain an appraisal. John Allen expressed interest in receiving contact information for the CT agricultural development rights program as well as information regarding the valuation from any appraisal. The real estate agent for the owners has said that while the owners are not opposed to preservation of the land, they do want to sell the property in a timely manner. Kelsey will attempt to find the study done of the Beebe Hill watershed to make it available at the Zoning Board of Appeals public hearing on January 29th. Burdick will talk with Ben Freund who serves on the advisory board that oversees the State agricultural development rights program.

New Business:

1. Undermountain Road Drainage Concern/Pixley Property: Kneeland Munson described current drainage issues occurring apparently as the result of a drainage ditch having been constructed across the Pixley property. Subsequent to the ditch construction, there has been a significant increase in the amount of water draining to Undermountain Road and ultimately into the culvert that empties onto the Sinclair property across the road. Munson said that historically, the field would be wet subsequent to significant weather events, but would dry out within a short period of time and road drainage was not an issue. Prior to the ditch construction, the field was being used for livestock; currently the field remains too wet to be used by livestock. Kelsey noted that drainage issues typically are not under the jurisdiction of wetland commissions unless erosion and sedimentation into wetlands or watercourses is occurring. Members suggested that Munson consult with Tim Downs of the Highway Department to see if the matter can be resolved possibly by putting a culvert under the Sinclair driveway and redirecting the additional roadside drainage into Deming Brook.

2. CT DEEP Tentative Permit to FirstLight CT Housatonic LLC: A copy of a permit for tentative approval for FirstLight to discharge into waters of the State was received. Said permit states that the discharge will not cause pollution of the waters of the State; public comment will be considered. Sinclair will bring this matter to the attention of the Housatonic River Commission.

Routing Sheets: none

Communications:

1. The Nature Conservancy Land Protection Grant: Notice of grant availability was received from TNC for protection of resilient and connected lands in pivotal landscapes in NW CT.

Sinclair made a motion to adjourn at 8:37 p.m.; seconded by Burz; passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Kelsey, secretary

