

Minutes
Watertown Conservation Commission
Town Council Chambers
Wednesday, October 4, 2017

Conservation Commission Members Present: Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Leo G. Martin, Patrick Fairbairn, Maria P. Rose, Jamie O'Connell

Commission Members Absent: Louis Taverna, Charles Bering

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness (adopted 12/6/17)
Martin Chaired.

1. Discussion – Conservation Commission's potential assistance to Planning Department needs

Fairbairn requested that the Conservation Commission begin an initiative for offering their expertise as a collective body to jurisdictional areas outside of the Watertown Wetland Ordinance, (WWO) the jurisdiction of the CC.

He expressed interest in offering assistance regarding open space issues, citing Arsenal Park as an area where the CC could have been more impactful. He also expressed interest in assisting the town in the Master Plan Process, and referred to a past CC meeting that Nancy Hammet appeared at to review the operational procedures of the Master Plan Process for the CC. Fairbairn said he wanted to establish some clear criteria for creating processes for their commission to become involved in a broader range of areas. Hayward reminded the CC that he represents their commission during the Site Plan Review meetings.

Martin asked what skill set the CC has that is not accounted for in the Site Plan Review and Master Plan Processes. He also cautioned that their group stood to step on the toes of people who are doing their jobs. Fairbairn explained that he was not afraid to step on toes when it ends up helping people do their jobs better.

Fairbairn said he was prepared to offer some motions for the CC to expand their capacity beyond the official jurisdictional boundaries. He asked if the CC felt inclined to make a collective comment on Victory Field.

O'Connell said she was in favor of the CC making comments in the form of writing collective letters. She also inquired if Fairbairn was seeking to establish a trigger alerting the CC about projects that are taking place outside of the WWO jurisdiction.

Hayward explained that if they were talking about setting triggers they would need to discuss modification of the ordinance.

Rose explained that they would need to have items published on their agenda before they could formally discuss them in a group discussion. Hayward affirmed that all items being discussed in a CC meeting need to be published in accordance with the Open Meeting Laws before discussion could take place.

Public Comments

Elodia Thomas a resident of Marion Rd. said she perceived conservation as a subject much broader than the WWO. She gave examples of her viewpoint such as evaluating lighting or potential glare from new developments, which present issues that directly impact the quality of life of the residents of Watertown.

Bob Lauricella a resident of Mt. Auburn St. characterized the Special Permit Process as one having a specific focus on large developments and projects in the town. He explained that he thought it might be possible that the Planning Board does possess the scope and level of expertise that the CC could be lending.

Caroline Bays a resident of Lovell Rd. said she thought it is positive that the CC is willing to offer their expertise to jurisdictions outside the WWO. Bays said she would be in favor of the CC writing letters, attending meetings and answering questions that they might have more qualifications to answer. She said she has witnessed other commissions attending meetings in outside jurisdictions making collective comments as an official body.

O'Connell said that it has been her experience that larger developers are sometimes willing to incorporate requests articulated by the city or town.

Fairbairn said that he would like to write a list of criteria for the CC that could be used for brainstorming about projects from outside their jurisdiction. He said he thought that even in areas of specified scientific expertise already served by other collaborators in the planning process, the CC ought to feel free to lend additional weight in support of such expertise whenever considered desirable.

Feltner commented that she did not think that the CC would need to modify their ordinance in order to get involved in more expansive ways.

Fairbairn began concluding the discussion by saying he would write a list to send to Steve Magoon, the Assistant Town Manager and Director of Community Development and Planning. The list will focus on ways that the Conservation Commission could serve the town by participating in areas of ongoing development taking place outside their jurisdictional duties. He also set aside making a CC decision about whether or not to make a collective comment about Victory Field.

Rose commented that she thought Hayward had said he wanted a member from the CC to attend the Arsenal Park Process meetings taking place with the town staff and officials, going back many

months ago. She encouraged Hayward to take action on that right away if others agreed. Hayward explained that Pallotta McDermott has been in attendance at the Arsenal Park meetings as a member of the CC, along with town officials and staff. He also explained that he is available to comment and respond to any and all questions the CC has, and that he works to support them as their Conservation Agent.

Martin directed the CC members to write down any issues they want to discuss at next month's meeting.

Hayward reminded the CC that it would be appropriate for everyone who is monitoring the issue of Open Space to make comments on the Open Space Monitor.

2. Discussion - Arsenal Park planning process

Next public meeting scheduled for October 11, 2017 at the Commander's Mansion

Hayward reviewed many of the same details about the Arsenal Planning Process that were shared at the September 6, 2017 CC meeting.

He described the open, public meeting format where comments were being encouraged and collected as written on sticky notes by the participants and posted on aerial photographs of the existing park. The park models were then taken along with the posted comments on them for synthesis into the record by the facilitation team.

Hayward explained that the comments from the September meeting have been explored within 3 different park configurations that will be unveiled at the October 11, 2017 meeting taking place at the Commanders Mansion.

Hayward explained that the information gathered at the October 11th meeting will be integrated into one plan that will be reviewed by the CC at their public meeting, and that the public will be invited to attend and make comments on the concept plan for Arsenal Park.

Michelle Cokonougher, a resident from Paul St. asked if the 3 park configurations would be available before the meeting on October 11, 2017. Hayward said he would contact her if they did become available before the meeting.

Lisa Feltner, Town Councilor said that she felt the CC is on the outside of all the planning that is taking place for Arsenal Park. She asked if they had expectations of their involvement in this process.

O'Connell said that while the CC has care and custody of the park, the Planning Department hired CDM for the job of planning the park and facilitating the public processes so that everyone would have input into the park.

Martin brought the focus of the discussion back into the context of a concept plan is. He explained that the public comments are being used to create a concept plan which is about 25% of what will actually be included in the final draft. He explained that there would be opportunity to comment again at 60% and 90%, and said there is a series of opportunities to make comments throughout the process on numerous occasions.

Hayward urged all members of the commission to attend the next meeting scheduled for the public taking place on October 11th.

3. Discussion - Community Preservation Act ordinance, status update

Feltner explained that the Rules and Ordinance Committee is drafting the CPA Ordinance at this time. All interested parties were invited by Feltner to attend the meeting to participate in the writing processes of the CPA Ordinance.

Feltner said that once the ordinance is written, it will go to the Sub-Committee for review and then make its way back to council for a vote.

Feltner expects that the taxes for CPA will not be taken until July 1, 2018.

Rose said that the process seemed to be stuck, or held up to her. Feltner explained that of the 3 members of the Town Council who are on the ordinance committee, each one is on up to 4 other committees in addition to the committee for writing the CPA Ordinance.

Martin projected that the CC will nominate one member for consideration for the CPA Committee after the ordinance has been written.

Feltner offered to forward information to Fairbairn about selecting candidates with appropriate credentials.

4. Minutes from September 6, 2017

After several modifications a motion was made to accept the minutes from the September 6, 2017 Minutes.

Motion: Pallotta McDermott made a motion to approve the minutes as modified. Rose seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached approving the minutes as modified.

5. Minutes from the August 7, 2017 joint meeting of the Conservation Commission and Human Services sub-committee of the Town Council

Members of the CC discussed the process of adopting the minutes from the Joint Meeting of the Conservation Commission and the Human Services Sub-Committee of the Town Council.

CC members will review the minutes which were sent to them by email, then send their comments to Martin, who will forward all comments back to Hayward for modification of the minutes from the Joint Meeting.

6. Agent report

- a.** DCR projects- Hayward updated the CC on the construction of the Pedestrian Bridge Replacement which is scheduled to resume in November. He explained that he learned there will be far less disturbance to the vegetation along the bank of the river than was originally thought. He suggested to the project manager that the planting of some attractive bulbs would be a nice enhancement to the space.

Meeting adjourned.