



## ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING  
Thursday, October 9, 2014  
7:30 p.m.  
Essex Town Hall – Meeting Room A

### DRAFT MINUTES

**1. Call to Order and Seating of Members**

Chairman Tom Danyliw called the hearing to order at 7:30 p.m. Seated for the meeting were regular members Alan Kerr and Ralph Monaco. Seated for member Carla Feroni was John Ackermann, and seated for member Linda Herman was Bob Laundry. Also in attendance were Town Planner John Guskowski, Attorney Alex Tighe, and several representatives of the Essex Land Trust. Vice Chairman Linda Herman arrived at approximately 7:35 p.m., and First Selectman Norm Needleman joined the meeting at approximately 7:55 p.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, September 18, 2014**

Motion to approve Minutes of September 18, 2014 by Alan Kerr, seconded by Bob Laundry. Motion carried, with Ralph Monaco abstaining.

**3. New Business**

Motion to move agenda items 3b and 3c ahead of 3a by Bob Laundry, seconded by Alan Kerr. Motion carried unanimously.

**b. Subdivision Approval Modification – Donald Meyer, 5 Rosewood Lane**

John Guskowski noted that the letter explaining the proposed easement was provided by First Selectman Needleman and an additional letter was provided by Attorney Royston this afternoon.

Motion to approve the proposed modification to allow Mr. Meyer to place his driveway and access his property across the town-owned land at the end of Rosewood Lane by Ralph Monaco, seconded by Alan Kerr. Motion approved unanimously.

**c. Driveway Easement – Petersons, Rosewood Lane**

Motion to approve the proposed modifications and recommend the Selectmen approve an easement for the Petersons to access their property across town-owned land at the end of Rosewood Lane by Bob Laundry, seconded by John Ackermann. Motion approved unanimously.

a. **Public Forum on Plan of Conservation & Development Update – Conservation & Open Space**

Chairman Danyliw introduced the topic of the Plan of Conservation & Development (PoCD) update, and how this forum would focus on Conservation and Open Space issues. He noted the correspondence submitted by Conservation Commission Chairwoman Kay Tucker. John Guszowski discussed the five main goals of the PoCD, including “Encourage permanent preservation and active stewardship of key natural resources” was the key element for this discussion. The current PoCD included a map (Plate 5) identifying priority properties for protection, and this map should be updated for the new Plan.

Jim Denham, the Chairman of the Essex Land Trust, made a presentation of ELT’s current status and goals. The Land Trust uses the State’s overall target of 21% of the State’s land permanently preserved as a benchmark, and are currently around 14% +/- in Essex (which does not include conservation easements within subdivisions or smaller town parks). Approximately 475 additional acres protected by the Town or ELT would be needed to hit the 21% goal. The ELT is currently under negotiation on approximately 150 acres to be added. The specific recommendations for the PoCD from the Land Trust included: 1) Funding the Town’s Open Space Sinking Fund; 2) The ELT would like to provide comments on subdivision proposals insofar as they impact specific open space that might be allocated to the Land Trust; 3) Having the opportunity to share the ELT perspective regarding cash in lieu of open space set-asides; 4) Focusing on priority corridors; and 5) Preserving the entirety of the Great Meadow.

Bob Nussbaum from ELT presented the key corridors that the Land Trust was working on, which included the Millrace corridor from Millrace to Comstock Park and the Burdick Property to the Vumbaco open space along the Westbrook Line; acquiring the Johnson Farm in fee and acquiring large adjacent parcels between Main Street and Mares Hill; the Preserve area between Bokum Road and Ingham Hill Road; Expanding holdings north of the Falls River; and James Glen to Deep River.

John Ackermann clarified that the Land Trust was interested in permanent preservation vs. tax abatement arrangements. Bob Nussbaum stated that the Land Trust was agnostic about tax abatements, because they did not represent permanent protection. The challenges of stewardship, particularly of smaller holdings, was discussed by the group. The Land Trust seeks opportunities to build in existing holdings. Chet Arnold from the ELT stated he would help develop an updated Open Space priorities map for inclusion in the PoCD. Jim Denham then updated the Commission on the progress in the Preserve project, for which approximately \$9 million of the \$10 million project total has been committed or identified. The Essex Land Trust will own the 70 acres in Essex, and the Town of Old Saybrook and State of Connecticut will jointly own the remainder. He also reviewed recent progress in preserving the Great Meadow, and how they have long-term goals and plans to acquire as much of it as possible, and to provide some kayak docking facilities. They also coordinate, through the RiverCOG Land Trust Exchange, with abutting town conservation groups.

Chet Arnold reviewed the concept of Low Impact Development with the Commission, and pointed out that it was a draft implementation item in the PoCD, and offered his help, through the UConn CLEAR and NEMO programs, to assist with this portion of the PoCD. Chairman Danyliw discussed how revision of Planning & Zoning Regulations would be a key element of this implementation.

Ralph Monaco asked about balancing preservation of land with availability of affordable housing, and the Commission and Land Trust representatives had a general discussion about the value of open space and accessibility to conservation areas for all citizens. Chairman Danyliw thanked the Land Trust for their excellent support and participation in the Planning process.

**d. Zoning Referral: Proposed Amendment to Section 111 (Signs and Lighting)**

John Guskowski discussed the updated regulations, and how the Economic Development Commission had been involved with the update, but there was still editing to be done based on comments. Chairman Danyliw asked if the Commissioners has specific comments. John Ackermann stated that the phrase “long time” in Sec. 111.B.9 was ambiguous; that the specific sidewalk edge in Sec. 111.D.3 should be clarified; that nonprofit or government entities should not be exempt in the definition of sign in Sec. 111.B.1. Linda Herman stated that the revised chart should be labeled as “proposed” or “revised.” Chairman Danyliw stated that Sec. 111.C.3.A should allow for new technologies beyond incandescent and fluorescent; Bob Laundry stated that the recommendations provided by the EDC on September 24 should be incorporated. First Selectman Needleman stated that internally lit signs similar to existing gas station signs in Centerbrook should be avoided in the future. John Guskowski stated he would convey these comments to the Zoning Commission.

**e. STEAP Grant Priorities**

First Selectman Needleman explained the evolution of the STEAP grant process, both within the Town of Essex and statewide. The grants were initially very focused on economic development projects, and in Essex had been largely the purview of the Selectman’s office along with the EDC, led by John Beveridge and Lee Thompson. Over the last several years, small municipalities in Connecticut, with limited opportunity for project grants, have pushed the definition of STEAP to include a wide variety of projects, often with very limited connection to strict economic activity. It therefore became a program of municipal upgrades. First Selectman Needleman stated that it is the responsibility of the Selectmen to identify these projects, submit the grants, and administer the projects. Since Lee Thompson’s passing, he has been relying more on support from John Guskowski, and seeks input from all stakeholders and Commissioners to identify priority projects.

Chairman Danyliw stated that while the responsibility lay with the Selectmen on these projects, EDC and Planning should be active in contributing ideas and suggestions for priorities. Alan Kerr recommended that the Planning Commission have an annual discussion of priorities and submit them to the Selectmen. Chairman Danyliw and First Selectman Needleman agreed that early spring, perhaps February or March would be a good timeframe for this discussion. First Selectman Needleman stated that it was likely that the next application, due in November, would focus on Main Street in Centerbrook, and on the sidewalk and intersection upgrades recommended by both the Transportation Study and the recent Centerbrook Visioning sessions.

The Commission and First Selectman Needleman proceeded to have a discussion about the changing demographics in Town, particularly related to young families with school-age children and how that would affect the Town's long-term economic growth potential and need for infrastructure or facility upgrades. The Commission agreed that the fears of rampant growth and school population explosions that drove policy decisions in the 1990s and early 2000s had dramatically changed and the Town should be looking toward orienting itself to compete as an attractive and appealing place to live for families.

#### 4. **Old Business**

##### a. **PoCD Updates and Next Steps**

John Guskowski reviewed several pending topics for discussion by Planning, which include: Sustainability/Resiliency; Economic Development; Zoning; and Tax Abatement for Open Space. The Conservation discussion occurred this evening, and he referenced the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan recommendations as a very solid basis for sustainability and resilience goals. The Commission decided to proceed with an Economic Development discussion at the next meeting. John Guskowski stated he would reach out to EDC, as well as the Board of Trade for participation.

##### b. **Ivoryton MSIF Grant Update**

John Guskowski stated that the steering committee was in the process of soliciting input from stakeholders, including the Parks & Rec Commission and the Ivoryton Village Alliance. They would be seeking to finalize this input and proceed to construction drawings in November, with construction targeted for May, during one of the Ivoryton Playhouse's hiatus periods.

##### c. **Centerbrook Village**

John Guskowski explained that he would be working with the Selectman's office and Susan Malan from EDC on developing a STEAP grant application for implementation of some of the Village committee's recommendations. The grant application is due in November.

#### 5. **Report of Committees and Officers**

##### a. **Report from Inland Wetlands Representative**

John Ackermann reported that the Wetlands Commission had not met since the last Planning meeting.

##### b. **Report from RiverCOG Representative**

Alan Kerr stated that the Regional Planning Commission had dealt with a number of minor zoning referrals, and noted that the Town of Westbrook was working on regulations for solar panels. John Guskowski stated that the RiverCOG would be appointing a new Executive Director within the week.

##### c. **Report from Economic Development Commission Representative**

Bob Laundry stated that the EDC had a brief meeting and discussed the Route 9 Gateway area, and sought to find solutions for some of the visual disarray on properties in this area, including LC Doane property.

**d. Chairman's Report**

Chairman Danyliw had no additional report.

**e. Planner's Report**

John Guszowski noted that he included application materials concerning a dock on the Windmill Property on Foxboro Road in the mailing packet, and would be following up with the Town Attorney and the DEEP regulators about the appropriateness of this application. He also updated the Commission on a couple of easement disturbance issues at Turnstone Drive and River Road Drive, and would be meeting with property owners to resolve them, or require applications for modification of subdivision approvals.

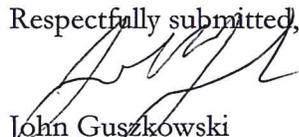
**6. Correspondence & Invoices**

Motion to pay invoice from CME Associates by Ralph Monaco, seconded by John Ackermann.  
Motion carried unanimously.

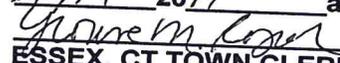
**7. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Alan Kerr, seconded by Ralph Monaco. Motion carried unanimously.  
Meeting was adjourned at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
John Guszowski  
Town Planner (Consulting)

RECEIVED FOR RECORD

10/14 2014 at 9:50 A.M.  
  
ESSEX, CT TOWN CLERK assist