

TOW Conservation Commission

Meeting Notes

Meeting of 09/13/04

Begin

7:35 pm

Attending

- Nina Guenste
- Salvatore LaBruna
- Claude Braithwaite
- Patricia Owen
- Jon Paul Heurich
- Mike Leary

Review of Previous Meeting Notes

- Minutes were handed out and read individually. Nominated for approval by Nina. Seconded by Pat.

Official Business

Supervisor John Ward addressed the commission. The following is a summary of the discussions between Mr. Ward and the members of the commission.

- Mr. Ward's introduction.
- Discussed the motion which was brought before the town board to replace Nina with Sal as head of the commission. The motion came from one individual and had little support from other members of the board. Mr. Ward prefers that the town board does not make these types of decisions in general, and instead lets the commission decide on its officers, policies, directions, etc.
- What is the commission's purpose?
 - Background. Actually formed in 1970's, but never had enough people to fill committees the town already had so the conservation commission was never populated.
 - Purpose. Support for the town board and planning board with issues involving the environment and conservation. Most projects go through the SEQR process. He will ensure that we receive all SEQR that are submitted to the town board. We should maintain regular contact with the planning board.
- Discussion of storm water runoff concerns (initiated by Mr. Ward). Mr. Ward is in discussion with a group in Beacon who are affiliated with a national group that specializes in this issue. 90% of pollutants in the Hudson are from storm water runoff. There have generated several studies, recommendations, etc., but very

- little has been incorporated into law at this point. They hope that changes to some laws will not only reduce storm water runoff, but also make it less expensive to build. He is attempting to have local builders meet with builders from other states who have build storm water friendly projects to discuss the benefits. The town will look at example projects / laws from PA because their local government structure is similar to ours. OC has no power over this issue, the town controls its own runoff. The builders will get together first to see if they will go along with it. John would like our town to be one of the first in the area to pass laws on storm water runoff because we are currently going through a new comprehensive plan.
- How does the committee get involved in the town government? How can we help? We should stay involved with and provide input to the planning board. Mr. Ward will have minutes of planning board placed in our file. One member of the commission should attend each planning board session. Small project are usually approved with 1-2 months of submission. Larger ones could take years to complete the process.
 - Are we a commission or committee? We should be a commission. This will be voted upon at the next town board meeting.
 - When will the 7th member of the commission be appointed? Several potential candidates were interviewed Wednesday night (9/8/04). The selection process should be complete and a 7th member appointed soon.
 - Concerns about the “Meadows Project”. Is the road too close to wetlands? There will be a retention pond, not a detention pond, a retention pond! Mr. Ward then referred back to the storm water runoff issues. Educate the public. Biggest polluters are parking lots. Making parking tighter to minimize the amount of blacktop.
 - What is the status of the master plan? Several differences of opinions on this depending upon who you ask. Mr. Ward thinks we are getting close. He believes the proposed plan use map is nearing completion then the town will be ready to convert the map to text to codify it. After that it needs to go to SEQR, then comments, then it becomes the master plan, then becomes zoning regulations. Example of things that still need completed. Some areas of the map are marked as low density. Low density needs to be precisely defined. What can and cannot be build in a low density area. Mr. Ward thinks that the town is close to the point of adopting the map. His biggest concern with the present map is a high density area near 17k where the WalMart warehouse was supposed to be built. The map also needs input from the public. Mr. Ward hopes to be ready for public hearings by early 2005. Everything will need addressed in the SEQR. That is where the commission gets involved. He is not sure of the details of how the SEQR will work for the master plan because the town has never been involved in an entire town comprehensive SEQR before.
 - Is there a method for the public to address sources of pollution. Dumping, burning garbage, noise pollution, light pollution? The town now has a full time code enforcer, Walt Barrett (sp?). Call him with complaints at the building department, ext 7809. The DEC is another good place for filing pollution complaints. Two people filling in wetlands have been stopped and made to remediate by the DEC

- recently. Do we currently have an ordinances against light pollution? Not currently, but it is being considered.
- Golden Triangle project. 2 phases. 1) 95 townhouses. 2) Office, retail, hotel, etc. The developers plan to level the land and remove 95% of trees on a 96 acre parcel. This project will have a big impact on traffic on Silver Lake-Scotchtown road. The developers plan to create a new exit from SR17 and a new town road to handle the additional traffic. Mr. Ward thinks the new exit is not a bad idea as the current exit is poorly laid out and dangerous. The traffic on Tower Drive is currently bad and the new exit and road would help this problem also. But, Mr. Ward is concerned with some of the commercial aspects. He feels it is OK to start on the residential aspect, but the commercial aspect needs more investigation. The SR17 ramp changes should be required for any development. What about the current state of empty retail space in other areas of the town? It is filling as quickly as it can be built. Regardless, the town cannot stop a building permit just because there is unfilled space elsewhere. Storm water management? This is perfect project to try this concept. The developers plan 51 acres to be permanently covered with buildings or asphalt. The parking could be addressed with vertical parking garages instead of parking lots which would leave much less area covered. What about sound / noise pollution from taking down the trees. Will this effect current residents? There is a stream on property that isn't shown in the plan or mentioned in the proposal? There is a public hearing on Wednesday night (9/15) that everyone should attend to voice these concerns.
 - Nina presents "vacant land" list. Its major weakness is that it doesn't list parcel that could be subdivided but already has a house on it, even if house may be destroyed to make room for the subdivision. We need to look at these properties and create descriptions of them so that when development projects are submitted we will already know what resources are on the properties. How to approach such a large task? By size? By property type? By location? Mr. Ward thinks that the most important issue is to require a certain amount of green per square foot of home and to possibly even require wetland in that green space (this refers back to the storm water runoff concerns). His biggest concern is multi-unit housing. Use the green space rule combined with a height limit to restrict the quantity of multi-unit housing. An example of where this could be applied is the new housing on Tower Drive. 190 plus units will be built that will probably add some 200-300 cars to an already overtaxed Tower Drive. Mr. Ward recommends considering this issue by subdivision and not be individual lots.
 - Mr. Ward exits the meeting.
 - Return to the Golden Triangle DEIS. The DEIS is commissioned by the developer for the project, therefore it is not necessarily a fair and balanced report. The general consensus of the commission is that there are several major concerns that have not been well address in the DEIS.
 - Runoff into Silver Lake.
 - Noise increases for local residence.
 - Traffic issues.

- Stream crossing the property that is not included in the DEIS maps. Loss of trees.
- A project of this magnitude needs more time for public comment and review by the conservation commission than what is possible with this short notice. Representatives of the commission (probably at least Pat, Nina and Sal) will attend the public hearing and Wednesday and petition for at least a 30 day delay to investigate / address these concerns.

Adjourned

9:30