

**FARMINGTON CANAL COMMISSION
TOWN OF HAMDEN**

Commission Meeting

October 5, 2010

7:30 PM

**Third Floor Conference Room
Hamden Government Center
2750 Dixwell Avenue**

Commissioners in Attendance: David Schaefer, Chairman
Johanna Becker
Barbara Gigliotti
Peter Haller
Bill Horowitz

Others in Attendance: Dan Kops, Assistant Town Planner
Florence Villano, Town Grant Writer
Peggy Craft, Acting Commission Clerk
Ken Minkema, Guest
Sarah Clark, Guest

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Schaefer called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Chairman Schaefer noted that due to the lack of a quorum at the September meeting there was no need to approve the informal minutes. It was agreed that approval of the July minutes would be considered at the next meeting.

Mr. Schaefer welcomed guests Ken Minkema and Sarah Clark, and Grant Writer Florence Villano to the meeting and explained how this Commission operates. Mr. Minkema introduced himself and said he was here to discuss the property at lock 14. Ms. Villano was attending this meeting to discuss a spur trail from the Canal to Town Center Park, and Ms. Clark wishes to observe the discussion of the trail and comment on trail crossings.

Mr. Schaefer invited Mr. Minkema to address the Commissioners. Mr. Minkema informed the Commissioners that he wears many hats including that of town Historian; he also serves on the Board of Historic Properties, and is a member of the Historical Society.

Mr. Minkema said that with the assistance of Mr. Schaefer and Ms. Villano the Historical Society applied for a tourism grant to have lock 14 surveyed. This lock is located at the lockkeeper's house, which will be opened soon. Mr. Minkema discussed the work that needs to be done. He said they would be interested in restoring the stonework, but the site would have to be restored first. Mr. Minkema displayed photos on his lap top computer and explained what is being proposed. The firm that will be doing the work is Architectural Consulting Services of Guilford. He added that they should be ready to go in about two months. Inlands/Wetlands Officer Tom Vocelli favorably reviewed this. Mr. Minkema is waiting for the final documents to arrive from the State. The Commission was asked if any maps or graphics exist. Mr. Schaefer suggested that he get in touch with Norm Thetford of Rails to Trails who might have this information. Mr.

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Haller also suggested that he touch base with the State Library where this information might be available. Mr. Haller asked how much the grant was. Mr. Minkema said it is a \$2,800 matching grant. Mr. Minkema also explained what would be done with the funds. He said the survey would cost \$1,900. Mr. Horowitz asked if there would be ground penetrating survey work done. Mr. Minkema said he did not believe so. Mr. Schaefer thank Mr. Minkema for his presentation.

Next, Mr. Schaefer asked Ms. Villano what spur she is here to discuss. Ms Villano explained that there has been a grant in existence for \$20,000 for development of a spur trail from the Canal to the Town Center Park. Ms. Villano said that \$20,000 is not sufficient for this project. She added that this project has been sitting, looking for additional money. Stimulus money has become available through an Energy Efficiency Block Grant by the Department of Transportation. It was requested that this spur trail be included in this grant. This has now become a reality, and has been approved, and Ms. Villano is now in the process of trying to implement this project. She has learned that this Commission had not been included in this project, and is here to get feedback from the Commission, including any concerns and suggestions the Commissioners may have to help make this work. The Commissioners reviewed the plans that were provided. Ms. Villano answered questions regarding the bridge that will be installed. Chairman Schaefer asked if the Town or a contractor would do this work. Ms. Villano said it will go out to bid. She added that it is the intended to have the engineering done by the Town. Next, Mr. Schaefer asked how much the grant is for. Ms. Villano said \$110,000. Mr. Horowitz asked if there is an alternative to the present plan. Use of the zigzag path was discussed. It was noted that the zigzag path was not chosen because it would not be handicap accessible and the path that was chosen would cause minimal damage to the wetlands. There was further discussion regarding the bridge. Mr. Kops explained that the bridge will be built so as not to interfere with the water flow and will not cause flooding.

Ms. Villano further explained that this will provide access to Town Center Park from the Trail and give people access to "Downtown Hamden". Mr. Horowitz asked why we should spend this money on a spur trail when there is a sidewalk on Dixwell Avenue. Ms. Villano said that the spur trail would be safer and more scenic. Mr. Schaefer said the beauty of the trail is that it is like a spine through the Town, and gets people off the road and out of their cars. Mr. Schaefer would like to be consulted when this project is ready. Mr. Kops discussed the width or the trail that has been widened to eight feet. Ms. Villano said she feels it is important to come here and discuss this with the Commission. She hopes to have this project started in the spring.

There was a discussion regarding the effect this spur will have on the Middle School. Ms. Villano said she has discussed this with Elisa Luppi a teacher at the Middle School and there did not seem to be a problem. Mr. Schaefer thanked Ms. Villano and said he feels this will be a positive thing for the trail.

PHASE I

There was nothing to report regarding Phase I.

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PHASE II

Mr. Kops said the reopening that was scheduled for today (October 5th) has been delayed to October 6th due to inclement weather. Mr. Kops further reported that there have been no complaints from citizens. Mr. Schaefer asked what is being done that required the closing. Commissioner Gigliotti explained the reasons for the closing. She said they are changing the grade, but it has not been paved yet.

PHASE IIB

Mr. Schaefer noted that behind Bruegers Bagels is a mess; the bench and the doggie station are broken. Mr. Schaefer added that this is not a surprise, and not unexpected. He suggested that the troop that installed this be notified and perhaps they will repair the damage.

Mr. Haller said there is still graffiti on the side of the Dixwell Avenue Bridge, on the wooden part. Mr. Kops will notify Public Work regarding this.

Next Mr. Schaefer noted that the southern part of the trail near Home Depot and the business next to the Stop & Shop in the Putnam Place Plaza have open dumpsters behind them.

PHASE III

Mr. Schaefer said that the Town has accepted Phase III. Mr. Kops has agreed to the right-of-way access needed for the underpass. The Council has approved this. The check has been issued and is in the hands of the attorney and should be taken care of momentarily.

Mr. Schaefer discussed inspection services. Mr. Schaefer explained the process and stated how important this is. Regarding the underpass, a Request For Qualifications has been (RFQ) has been issued. Mr. Kops explained what this process is. It was agreed that Mr. Kops will report back to the Commission next month regarding the progress being made regarding this project. Mr. Schaefer further discussed this project along with the Commissioners. The lengthy discussion included the bid process and the problems that may ensue. Mr. Schaefer said one other concern is the water main. Mr. Schaefer said this pipe could be moved only a quarter of an inch during construction. Mr. Kops said that the RWA want to replace it but not at this time. If it breaks during construction RWA will replace it at our cost. This could also delay construction and add to the cost due to contractor fees for delaying the project. Mr. Kops said that it is important that a contractor be chosen who has experience dealing with this type of work. Mr. Kops said that a sheath will be but in to prevent this but it is a concern that the contractor chosen would not have the expertise to do this type of work. Mr. Schaefer said we have patience but it is not unlimited. He added that this would be discussed further at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business to come before the Commission.

NEW BUSINESS

There was a discussion regarding an application from a church on Haig Street. Mr. Kops showed plans, and the Commissioners present reviewed these plans. This Commission is asked to make a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission regarding this application.

Mr. Schaefer said that it would be great if use is made of this building, but attention should be given to the façade and the plantings on the trailside of the building.

Commissioner Horowitz motioned the following: The Commission thinks it is positive that this building will be put to productive use. The Commission's concerns are the appearance of the property where it abuts the trail and urges those who review this proposal to do what they can to assure that the landscaping and the side of the building will be improved to make it attractive to Trail users. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Haller and passed unanimously.

Pedestrian Crossing Concerns

Ms. Clark addressed the Commission regarding trail crossings. She is a member of the West Woods Civic Association. The Association met with the Traffic Calming Committee last spring regarding this issue, and they were asked to make recommendations. One of the points they made in a memo to the Traffic Calming Commission is the danger at the Shepard Avenue Crossing. Ms. Clark explained this problem, and suggested that the committee look into installation traffic calming devices such as rumble strips, signage, speed bump, etc. She said they were less concerned with the River Road and Brooksvale Avenue crossings. She said that she spoke with Mr. Kops this summer to find out if there were any further thoughts regarding this problem, such as the Mayor's suggestion to place "Yield to Pedestrians" signs in the road. Mr. Schaefer said that this is a good point to raise. He feels that signs placed in the road are a good idea. Mr. Kops was asked to come up with a prototype and to work with Engineering, and the Town Attorney, and also to hold an informal meeting with Hamden Police Chief Wydra. Mr. Schaefer added that hopefully these ideas would be implemented by spring. Mr. Horwitz said that Cheshire has signs and markings regarding pedestrians on the Trail, and asked if we should consult with them. Mr. Kops said he feels we should discuss this with both Cheshire and New Haven. Commissioner Gigliotti volunteered to take pictures of the signs on the Trail in Cheshire and New Haven. Ms. Clark further discussed the Shepard Avenue crossing and suggested preventing right turns on red at the intersection. There was a discussion regarding the pedestrian signs on the trail. Mr. Kops will look into the cost of the signs, and this Commission will possibly be able to make a recommendation next month.

Update on Bench Donation

There was a discussion regarding a request to donate a bench to be placed on the trail in memory of Zachary Bzydyra, a young man who was killed in a car accident. Zachary was an avid bicycle rider, often using the Canal for his training rides. His mother, Suzann Kober wishes to place this bench as a tribute to her son. **Commissioner Gigliotti motioned to approve the donation of the bench so long as the location is one that has been approved by the Commission. Commissioner Haller seconded the motion that passed unanimously.**

Mr. Schaefer discussed the idea of an "Adopt A Mile" program on the trail.

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ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the Commission and Chairman Schaefer called for a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Becker motioned to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gigliotti and passed unanimously.** Chairman Schaefer adjourned the meeting at 8:56 PM.

Submitted by: _____
Peggy Craft, Acting Clerk of the Commission