



Town of Hamden

Planning and Zoning Department

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THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION, Town of Hamden, held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, March 30, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Hamden Government Center, 2750 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden, CT. The following issues were discussed:

Commissioners in attendance: Mike Horn, Marigrace Lark, Ted Kennedy, Bill Doheny, Richard Bell, Hamilton Milroy, Mike McManus

Commissioners Absent: Aris Stalis, Peter Vitali, Daniel Camenga

Others in Attendance: Diane Blais USDA NRCS, Assistant Town Planner Dan Kops, Meeting Clerk Gerry Tobin

Commissioners McManus introduced Diane Blais, of the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, who spoke to the Commission about what, where and when the Commission should be concerned. Ms. Blais did a quick assessment of the Maselli property before tonight's meeting. Her department used to be soil conservation service that started back in the dust bowl. They work with landowners on soil conservation. They have branched out from soil and do agriculture, wildlife, forestry, and implement farm bill programs. Their department is non regulatory and offers technical assistance. While they can't help municipalities directly, they can be helpful to towns through landowners. All of their work is conservation based – water management, greenhouses, energy conservation, etc. People can get money from them to write a forestry or greenhouse plan for them. Most of their customers are agricultural. They help small start up farms with managing crops and pests, and partner with UCONN Extension Service.

Ms. Blais said the NRCS was allowed to work with municipalities until 2008, including funding. They can no longer give funds to towns, but can give money to farmers. They have 5 field offices in the state. The Hamden Office covers Middlesex and New Haven counties. Mike McManus said Ms. Blais was able to bring up a map on the Maselli farm and had a lot of information on habitat, winery, etc.

Ms. Blais said Maselli Farm is a steep site, mostly fine sandy loams, which are the worst for gully erosion. The less tillage the better and diversions can be added. The soil is prime farm soil. Mr. Horn presented some background on the property. Ms. Blais said now would be a good time to clear out multiflora rose, and the apple trees are diseased and should be removed. She also advised seed be put down before winter. Her recommendation would be to put in hay and keep for two years to give a person time to establish themselves before they start investing. The Maselli Farm in Woodbridge received an earmark from Rosa DeLauro, and did a lot with fund raising. They did some amazing things.

Mr. Horn would like to get copies of the printed materials to the Mayor's Office. Ms. Tobin will give her copies to the Mayor.

For a vineyard, for the first couple of years, the vines would need irrigation.

At the top of the road someone has started a small patch.

The Town needs response from the RFP to see who is going into the property and what they are planning to do, and if someone wants to go in there to farm, they would have to remove the trees.

Mr. Horn likes haying but not until species have fledged – bobolinks, fox, and others. Ms. Blais said they use August 31st as the date after which hay can be mowed..

The only soil contamination according to the reports is pesticide. One person at the Dunbar Hill Civic Association (DHCA) meeting said the soil was contaminated. Mr. Kops said a study was done by the developer of the proposed lots, and two chemicals were noted. The DEP would not intervene. It is not regulated and a non issue.

The information distributed is in the NRCS GIS system.

There was discussion on the proposal to put a winery on the property. There were questions as to whether the RFP has been published again. If it has not, when would it be, and if it has, when is the clock up.

Ms. Blais said in order to qualify for assistance, the land would have to be in production for at least two years, then they could enter into an agreement with the NRCS for pesticides, irrigation, etc.

Discussion on conservation easement (deed restriction. Dr. Doheny would like to see the Town put the conservation easement on the land now, before anything happens. It would commit us to a course of action.. Seven Commissioners agreed. **It It us the unanimous consensus of the Commissioners here this evening that we should get the conservation easement now.**

Dr. Doheny said the house is separate and moving forward with Habitat for Humanity. Mr. McManus said if the property goes through natural succession, the invasive species would take over. Ms. Larke felt that more people need to be interested in the land. Mr. Horn said we have to present the positive aspects rather than listen to the naysayers.

1. Review Minutes of February 23, 2011

Mr. Bell made a motion to approve the minutes of February 23rd. Dr. Doheny seconded the motion. Mr. Kennedy abstained. The minutes were approved by a vote of 6 in favor, 1 abstained.

2. Old Business

Maselli Property

Bill Doheny, Marigrace Lark, Dick Bell and Mike Horn attended the sometimes chaotic meeting of the Dunbar Hill Civic Association. The Civic Association will do a study of the Barn and will put up \$500 toward the cost. They will also assess the building's architecture and history. The second step will be to have an engineering study done and third will be the decision as to whether or not to save the barn. The Habitat proposal was endorsed by the Dunbar Hill Civic Association

DeMatteo Property

Mr. Horn looked at it again, it is a deceased farm.

3. New Business:

Bill Doheny showed a map of a potential new acquisition off of West Shepard Avenue, property of TJRaccio. Deliberations will take place next Thursday at 4:00 p.m. at the Woodbridge Town Hall. Dr.

Doheny said we should prioritize all of our properties like the state does. Hopefully this will be our next acquisition.

April 30th is the Earth Day celebration. Mr. Horn said we have a table, and he will put together a slide presentation of Hamden critters. Our question for the scavenger hunt this year is “Are there wild deer in Hamden.” Mr. Horn like to have some assistance at the table.

The Town is working on the Maselli Farm map and legal description for Habitat for Humanity. We will not do a cleanup because Habitat will be coming in to work on the property.

4. Adjournment:

Mr. Kennedy made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Milroy seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Meeting Clerk