



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 27, 2013 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: Bill Doheny, Mike Horn, Richard Bell, Mike McManus, Hamilton Milroy, Peter Vitali, Marigrace Larke

Commissioners absent: Kevin Burgio

Others in Attendance: Connecticut Community Garden Association President Cordalie Benoit, Dunbar Hill Civic Association President Michelle Mastropietre, Assistant Town Planner Dan Kops, Meeting Clerk Gerry Tobin

Mr. Horn called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Horn introduced Cordalie Benoit, President of the Connecticut Community Garden Association. She also worked for the Elm City Park Conservancy and is active in several garden organizations. Ms. Benoit is a master gardener. Ms. Benoit showed some photos of community gardens in Connecticut. She also presented a map showing the towns in Connecticut with community gardens, also called community managed open space in public location. Ms. Benoit had a list of programs in the state, some run by parks and recreation departments, other municipal organizations, and some private entities. Some gardens are located on park land and some on other lands.

Mr. Milroy mentioned that Hamden has a community garden in town center park, near the library, which was built in house by the engineering department and a group of volunteers.

There was discussion on raised bed gardens. Ms. Benoit said they are good for use by handicapped, and for gardens started on macadam, etc. Mr. Horn described the Masselli farm property located on the side of a hill, consisting of 30 acres with a house that was remodeled by Habitat for Humanity. The house now has people living in it. Mr. Horn described the property. The contamination on the parcel is pesticide from a previous agricultural use.

Ms. Benoit said the Association promotes organic gardening techniques, and integrated pest management. Mr. Doheny asked how you use IPM on land that was formerly used for agriculture. Can you call it organically grown if you don't spray but the pesticides are already in the soil. Ms. Benoit said there are systems by which you can go from a conventional farm to an organic farm over a couple of years time.

Ms. Benoit said a community farm would have someone in charge of managing most of the space and directing the volunteers, whereas a community garden is operated by individuals each having equal say.

Most of the New Haven gardens are under the New Haven Land Trust in conjunction with the Common Ground School. There was discussion regarding the source of seeds. New Haven gets seeds from Common Ground School. Also, some gardeners save seeds, and there are seed exchanges.

Master gardeners can provide training via a series of talks. Gardeners can plant seedlings at home and transplant to the garden. People need to know about cold crops and warm weather crops. Community gardens are great because experienced gardeners love to share with those that are not experienced. There was discussion about the rules. First an area would have to be chosen, a deer fence installed, a compost area set aside, and there has to be water on the property. Hamden's community garden plots are 4' by 9', but they can be various sizes. There was discussion on parking. Mr. Milroy mentioned that for the Town Center Park garden they figured one parking space for every six plots. There was discussion regarding water on the Masselli property.

Dr. McManus said it will take some doing to get the plans prepared. He doesn't see seeds in the ground this year, but perhaps a cover crop like alfalfa could be planted, which could be plowed under to enrich the soil. Dr. Doheny said we have to prepare a proposal for the Mayor's review. There are some grant funds available.

Mr. Bell asked about public liability. If public land is open for free, there is no liability to the Town. Ms. Benoit said the American Community Garden Association has come up with an insurance policy to cover liability that is quite affordable. Dr. Doheny said part of the information he dropped off to the Mayor was something from the farm bureau, which the Mayor can review with the Town Attorney. DEP has grant funds available that will cover clearing and running utilities.

1. Review: Minutes of February 27, 2012

On Page 2, change log cabin property to Gargiulo property.

Mr. Milroy made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2013 meeting as amended. Mr. Vitali seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

2. Continuing Business:

A. Masselli property and other properties of interest, C.I.A. grants

Dr. Doheny reported that the grant for the barn will be activated once we get the report. A representative from the Connecticut Trust, Al Gorman, the building official and himself went through the barn. The building inspector said the barn is in beautiful condition. This will be reported to the Mayor. We will then submit a grant application for a new roof. Urban Miners is storing stuff inside the barn. Mr. Kops said if they are doing that they are violating the zoning regulations. Dr. Doheny said also, the keys are missing so we need new locks and keys. The circuit rider suggested the saplings around the barn be removed so the roots won't grow into the foundation. The cover to the well is collapsing. There are still 55 gallon drums there. They are probably empty.

Dr. Doheny reported that there is an editorial in the Hartford Courage today about the 820 acre farm state has been leasing out, and the proposal to make it permanent farm land with a conservation easement to be held by a local land trust. Farmland that is not legally protected is always vulnerable.

Problems continue on the Log Cabin site. The 48 acres are still being negotiated.

B. Survey of Town owned properties

Mr. Vitali distributed the report on Town owned properties. He said it is not completed, but he used the Hamden GIS summary and data sheet. He assumed that when the house was given to Habitat for Humanity, the land went with the house (house lot).

C. East Rock polo field – continued vigilance

Non native species are being removed from the archery field. The birds are coming back, and there have been courtship activities by the woodcock.

3. New Business:

A. Report from Earth Day Committee Representative

Ms. Larke reported that Earth Day will take place on April 20th. Ms. Larke distributed Earth Day flyers for posting wherever possible. She detailed some of the events taking place at Earth Day. Recycled rhythms needs recycling material to make instruments.

B. Olin Powder Farm / Five Lakes Park

Mr. Horn received a communication from Mr. Kops saying the Mayor said the remediation is not done in Newhallville, so we will have to wait another couple of years for any efforts at Five Lakes Park. Mr. Kops said as far as passive recreation, that is problematic. When they were building the addition at Whitney Center, they found so much stuff buried in the soil, they had to have the bomb squad there.

Mr. Horn announced that Mr. Stalis has resigned because of his workload. We thank him for his service and wish him well in his future endeavors. We need a new corresponding secretary.

Mr. Bell reported that the water at Five Lakes Park was tested in the 1990's for long periods of time and nothing ever showed up. It will not be tested again unless something shows up.

Ms. Larke said Quinnipiac purchased two more parcels, one on Thompson Street and one on Dixwell Avenue. She asked if that meant taxes were no longer being paid on the properties. Mr. Kops said that would depend on what the properties were being used for.

4. Adjournment:

Mr. Bell made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Vitali seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Meeting Clerk