

TOWN OF HAMDEN

NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION, Town of Hamden, held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday March 31, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Hamden Government Center, 2750 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden, CT and the following will be reviewed:

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Horn, Dr. Doheny, Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Milroy, Mr. Camenga, Mr. Bell, Mr. McManus, Ms. Larke, Mr. Vitali, Mr. Stalis

Others in Attendance: Dan Kops, Assistant Town Planner, Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk, Dominic Grant, Guest

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

1. Review Minutes of February 24, 2010

Correction page 1, Attendance: Mr. Bell was not in attendance; 5th line from bottom, change quick claim to quit claim; page 2, 6th paragraph, 2nd line, conservation easement is for the Masselli Farm, not the Farmington Canal; and 4th line, insert after the Farm “could” be given to the Land Trust.

Mr. Doheny made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 24th meeting as amended. Mr. Bell seconded the motion. Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Stalis abstained. The vote was eight in favor.

New Business

Mr. Horn introduced guest Dominic Grant, a student at the Yale School of Management and the School of Environmental Studies. He is doing a project with the Land Trust looking at the Maselli Farm and ways to move forward. He Looking for a sense of where things are today and a little of the history of the farm. He would like to hear Commissioners' ideas. Mr. Grant told the Commission the Massaro Farm in Woodbridge, in partnership with Town of Woodbridge is trying to establish a community farm. There are also models where individual farmers would do a straight lease for a particular kind of farm, orchard, cattle, etc.

Mr. Grant said the Maselli Farm is an interesting property embedded in a residential neighborhood. He thinks a community based development with public access would be a good use. Mr. Horn said the neighbors are totally aware of what is going on on the property and are afraid of something objectionable going in there. Mr. Grant is familiar with the study committee and the Land Trust. Other interested parties are this commission, the town, and the neighbors. There have been many ideas for the property. The RFP process has brought in no additional proposals. The commercial farmer is out of consideration. The 501 (c) (3) is on shaky grounds. The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is being considered. There probably will be no farming this year because town government is unable to act expeditiously. Preserving old barns is

a hot item in the state right now, and we do have an architectural historian in town who is interested. There is a possibility of some grant money being available. Selling the house adds many things to the equation. Mr. Grant asked what is the town's plan for managing the property between now and when farming begins. One idea is just turning the whole thing over to the Land Trust. Another option would be to put a conservation easement on the property similar to those we give to the state or the RWA and turn it over to the Land Trust. The farming easement runs about 20 pages. Mr. Camenga said the Land Trust does not have the manpower to manage a farm.

Dr. Doheny said the runoff onto the road is clean. The CSA is viable, and they might be able to do some cold crops in the fall. There will be further meetings. Mr. Camenga asked if the community garden by the library is in demand. While it is not fully leased, it might be because of the lack of publicity.

Mr. Stalis asked how a CSA operates. Dr. Doheny said you can buy into it with equity or sweat equity. Mr. Stalis asked Mr. Grant if he has seen a centralized information center that would tell CT restaurants, etc., where they can buy fresh produce. Mr. Grant said there are several. CT Grown is one. There is another that lists grass fed beef, and there are many farms that have waiting lists of people wanting to buy in. He said said CSA farming has been expanding in CT and depending on what crops are grown, you can make money with a small farm. With a good long term lease and some good publicity, you could attract people that would be interested in making it work. The next step is for the Maselli Farm Study Committee to meet with the administration. Mr. Stalis said the biggest problem is the house. The bottom line is to save the land. Mr. Bell asked if anyone has spoken with the State Department of Agriculture. Dr. Doheny said we have talked to the Soil and Water Service and they said yes, give us a proposal, but we don't have answers.

The agreement between the Town and the State says we cannot earn more than \$7,500 per year from the property for the next 20 years. Mr. McManus said we have to know what the hazards are. Something must be done to get the conservation easement in place, with or without the house. Ms. Larke said we could have a tenant in the house for under the \$7,500 per year that would be able to work the land. Mr. Bell said the conservation easement is a forward step and we should do that. We should leave the house and barn out of it. There are 34 acres, and we could put the easement on 33 acres. The property was originally three parcels, but it is now one. We can probably carve out the house. There was discussion on the Connecticut Farmland Trust.

There was discussion on getting the building inspectors out to inspect the house. While it is listed as an 1880's farm house, only one fireplace was found, as well as some type of furnace in the basement.

The Commission feels that the Mayor's office should find out what is going on in the house through a code inspection by the Building Department at a minimum. They also want to pursue the conservation easement immediately. Mr. Bell said someone should develop a marketing sheet on the possible uses of the property.

2. Old Business:

Properties of Interest: There were no updates on the following properties of interest

- 1) Stahnke Property
- 2) Benedict Property
- 3) Clay Pit
- 4) Five Lakes Park
- 5) Maselli Farm

3. New Business:

1) Review new properties of interest

2) Plan for Earth Day

The maps from Ron Walters will be part of the Commission's Earth Day display. The maps are of Five Lakes Park and the Maselli farm. The Commission will send a formal thank you to Ron Walters for the great job he did on the maps. Mr. Bell will also advise Mr. Walters' supervisor of the Commission's appreciation. Mr. Horn said he needs assistance from Commissioners at Earth Day during the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. He will be taking Dr. Mel around from 11:15 through the environmental awards at noon and lunch. After that, he will be working with Wind Over Wings in the auditorium. We will be using Ms. Tobin's computer for our display, so someone has to cover the table. Dr. Doheny, Mr. Milroy and Mr. Camenga will help with coverage.

Dr. Doheny received a letter, which he paraphrased, from Calcagni Associates Land Consulting. They have local investors interested in purchasing land for residential/condos/ and state they can bring land right up through the planning and zoning process. We have to make sure that they don't purchase land that we want for opens space.

Mr. Milroy asked what is going on with Mr. McMahon. Mr. Kops believes he has been foreclosed upon.

There was discussion on the Stahnke property being landlocked and undevelopable, and the Town doesn't want to spend money on a survey. Dr. Doheny said we should take it for back taxes with a quit claim.

The Commission would like a response from the Mayor's Office regarding the Stahnke Property.

4. Adjournment

Mr. Stalis made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Larke seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Meeting Clerk