

THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION, Town of Hamden, held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday April 28, 2010 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: Peter Vitali, Mike Horn, Richard Bell, Michael McManus, Aris Stalis, Hamilton Milroy, Bill Doheny

Commissioners Absent: (excused) Daniel Camenga, Ted Kennedy, Marigrace Larke

Others in Attendance: Representative Peter Villano
Felicia Tenza, Randy Miller Bob Pattison (President) Whitneyville Civic Association
Assistant Town Planner Dan Kops
Commission Clerk Gerry Tobin

Mr. Horn called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Guests were in attendance to discuss the Lake Road opening. Mr. Horn said Lake Road was closed to traffic when the Davis Street Bridge was redone about 22 years ago. Since that time, this Commission and other organizations have been working to put in the Whitney Trail (Mill River Trail) from Sleeping Giant State Park to New Haven Harbor. A portion of this trail was a walking trail down Lake Road from one end to the other with an observation deck, which has been built.

In 2006, there was a conceptual plan "Alternate 2" by the engineering department, showing the street opened up and a 5' walking trail with guard rail. Mr. Horn distributed copies of the plan.

Mr. Horn was looking forward to getting the Whitney Trail up and running during his lifetime. He asked the Commissioners how they felt about reopening Lake Road, and then gave the members of Whitneyville Civic Association an opportunity to present their comments.

Mr. Kops was involved in a meeting two months ago where the actions of the Traffic Commissioners were discussed as well as concerns of the Whitneyville Civic Association. M. Milroy walked the area and feels it was a good opportunity for a little bit of open space. Mr. Stalis feels this Commission should look at how the roads in town are treated as they are really open space. When the overlook was put in with the state funding, the bollards were put in. At that time it probably went through town review. This Commission was looking at it and went to Lake Road when the jersey barriers were up. The bollards are a valid method to keep traffic out, but would still allow the emergency vehicles access. One of the things he thought of was an opportunity to take care of the storm water running down from Whitney Avenue. He feels the walking path is good for the obesity issue, walkable communities, etc. He also sees enforcement issues there. Mr. Stalis said that the reopening of the road came up because of a desire for parking by a private enterprise. Dr. McManus is ambivalent about it, and has probably only driven down the road once when it was open. Mike

Horn feels the street should be left the way it is. First responders have immediate access. Mr. Bell asked if the RWA had input when the Traffic Commission took this action a few weeks ago.

A letter from RWA was submitted by Bob Pattison expressing its desire to have the road remain closed. This letter was presented to the Traffic Commission. A traffic review was conducted and cited no safety concerns should the road remain closed, and cited what might happen if it was opened regarding parking. Bill Doheny asked how long the road has been closed, and what problems have occurred since the road was closed. Mr. Kops said the road has been closed for 22 years, and there have been no problems that he is aware of. Mr. Stalis mentioned adverse possession. Mr. Kops said the traffic study he distributed concludes that the traffic would have no adverse impact. Mr. Bell feels it is a dark and too narrow road.

Randy Miller, 1175B Whitney Avenue, Whitney Wood Wood Condominiums, and member of the Whitneyville Civic Association addressed the Commission. He is happy to hear the opinions of this Commission. Mr. Miller said two very conceptual plans were put together by Bob Brinton, Hamden's Town Engineer, without any thought that it would go on the agenda of the Traffic Authority. The traffic review distributed was done in 2006 and paid for by Lakewood apartments, which was the petitioner to open Lake Road. On this report there are many errors, both typos and factual errors, and the report doesn't address key issues. Lakewood Apartments contended they needed more parking. The issue went away, and came up again this year. Everyone except Lakewood Apartments objects to opening Lake Road. Whitney Woods, Roche Dinkaloo, Whitney Way and several other condo and apartment complexes in the area, business owners and a church in the area, all prefer to leave the road closed.

The traffic authority proposes one way southbound on Lake Road which would cause people traveling north or east to have to go way out of their way to get to Whitney Avenue. It is also almost impossible to go south on Lake Road and take a left turn. Mr. Miller said there are huge costs associated with this. Felicia Tenza spoke about fire truck access. There was a fire in the fall at Lakewood Apartments, and the fire trucks arrived at the scene unimpeded. In case of an emergency evacuation, bollards can be removed with wire cutters or a key. RWA has been on record since 2006 as being in favor of keeping the road closed. Bob Pattison of 26 Augur Street and President of the Whitneyville Civic Association said that the Hamden Land Trust headed by Andy Brand and Marty Mador of the Mill River Trail group are all against opening the road. Members of the Whitneyville Civic Association are firmly in favor of keeping Lake Road closed. Their opinion is that it is all about parking, and to that end, WCA has been working with the Mayor and the Planning Office to develop a plan for the village center, which would include on street parking on Whitney Avenue during off peak hours. This would help with the traffic calming issues, and would also help the businesses in the area.

Mr. Pattison said the Town is moving toward traffic calming, but the Traffic Commission seems to be working against it.

Mr. Stalis wondered if beyond reading the agenda on line, would there have been an opportunity for the apartment owners to know that this item was going to be on the agenda. Mr. Horn felt everyone had the opportunity to see this as the agenda is posted on line.

Mr. Bell asked if the train has left the station. Mr. Horn said no, and reminded everyone this Commission is advisory.

Mr. Horn called for a motion that the south end of Lake Road be left in its current state as a pedestrian walkway. Moved by Peter Vitali, seconded by Mr. Bell. Discussion followed.

Mr. Stalis said apart from the expense, there is a health benefit of the walkway, which is a national trend. That project went through two years ago when the overlook was designed, and if these issues were not addressed at that time, he doesn't see why they should come up again now. The traffic issue is an enforcement issue. There was discussion on trash in the area. Dr. Doheny said with Mr. Vitali's permission we might want to add to the motion that **This Commission is taking this position to agree with the RWA, and in the view of this Commission, reopening Lake Road would have a potentially serious impact on water quality. Mr. Vitali accepts this addition to his motion. Mr. Bell also accepts and seconds the motion. The vote was six in favor, one opposed and the motion passed.**

State Representative Villano is pleased by the action of this commission and said the mission of this Commission is to preserve the environment and the quality of life and help to persuade the mayor that this is a good thing to do. Excellent public policy. Commended commission.

1. Review Minutes of March 31, 2010

Dr. Doheny made a motion to approve the minutes of March 31st. Mr. Bell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

2. Old Business:

- 1) Stahnke Property no information
- 2) Benedict Property no information
- 3) Clay Pit no information
- 4) Five Lakes Park Mr. Villano said the people who live in the area of Five Lakes Park, his constituents, are anxious to see the area developed as a park. They are being patient. Mr. Villano has spoken to the Commissioner of DEP and they are agreeable to getting bonding funds, but this has to wait until the Newhall Remediation is done. We have a standstill in Newhall, because the residents will not accept partial remediation, they want enough remediation down deep enough so there won't be environmental land use restrictions put on the properties. If the Commissioner proceeds with partial remediation of 4' only, land use restrictions go on the deeds and property values diminish immediately.
- 5) Maselli Farm

Mr. Doheny said we are trying to get a working farm in there, and Dunbar Hill Civic Association is in favor of that. The New Haven School system is looking for someplace to buy produce. We need to get the town to decide. The DHCA wants a conservation easement to the land trust.

3. New Business:

Mr. Horn thanked Ms. Tobin for the use of her computer for Earth Day. He also thanked Ron Walters of the RWA for the maps of the Maselli and Dadio Farms. Mr. Horn also thanked the Commissioners for helping to man the table at Earth Day and said it went well, with probably 4,000 people attending.

1) Review new properties of interest – nothing to report

2) Earth Day Recap

Earth day went well – probably 4,000 people attended.

In response to Mr. Villano's question, Mr. Kops said the Whitney Center development will not impact 5 Lakes Park.

The road into Dadio Farm has been started. There are a couple of companies going in there, as well as the Fire Department. Mr. Horn mentioned that this Commission recommended that the Dog Park go on lot 4.

Mr. Pattison said he spoke to the owner of Whitney Center, who said that the project was delayed because of some live ammunition found on the property. He also said that the Whitneyville Civic Association is working with Urban Open Space on the corner of Servoss & Mather Streets, abutting RWA property. This parcel is owned by the Land Trust and is a kettle property. They came up with a proposal to clean up the area and install a new fence. He is working with a person from Pratt & Whitney who has a green fund.

Mr. McManus asked if it would behoove this Commission to get the Dunbar Hill Civic Association to get the Town moving on the Maselli property. Dr. Doheny said the committee has gone through the process to see who is and who is not going in there. He would like to Mayor to call a meeting to get something moving on the Maselli Farm. Mr. Kops said there has been movement on getting the Building Department in to inspect the house.

4. Adjournment:

Dr. Doheny made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Meeting Clerk