

TOWN OF SOMERS
Conservation Commission

600 Main Street
P. O. Box 308
Somers, Connecticut 06071

REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, June 3, 2015
7:00 p.m. Town Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Joan Formeister called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Members present were: Joan Formeister; Greg Genlot; Dan Fraro; Lise Wood; Candace Aleks; Henry Broer. Those absent were: Karl Walton; Todd Whitford. Lise Wood was seated for Karl Walton.

Joanna Shapiro introduced herself to the Commission as the new Wetland Agent for the Town of Somers, replacing David Askew who has left the North Central Conservation District. Joanna has filled in as wetland agent in the past.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Application #684. 329 Billings Road. Grading/filling for pasture within wetland and stormwater discharge within upland review area. Fawn Hill Farm LLC.

Joanna Shapiro explained that she had called the applicant earlier in the day to ask if he wanted to go forward with this application. John Gale, owner of this property, told her that he was not aware of tonight's meeting and could not attend, but did not want to withdraw his application at this time.

Shapiro presented an updated drawing on behalf of the applicant, which adequately addressed the stormwater discharge point as requested previously, an activity that was delegated to the wetland agent to handle administratively. Shapiro noted that the plan did not address the proposed conversion of a wetland area into a horse pasture. Shapiro discussed with the commission that if the applicant wishes to go forward with his plan to fill an area of wetlands to create a pasture, that the commission would need to decide at this meeting whether they would consider that to be a significant activity, and if so, set a public hearing date for the following meeting in order to stay within the required regulatory timeline.

Joan Formeister said that we could set a public hearing date on this application and then cancel it, if necessary. The Commission recalled that John Gale believes that he is entitled to an agricultural exemption. Formeister said that he is not entitled to an exemption, citing the agricultural exemption of the wetland statute, and stated that this is a significant wetland that must be protected.

Commissioners discussed whether the pasture within the wetland is necessary, given the large amount of land already being converted for agricultural use on the property, and also recalled that the applicant was interested in constructing a pond in the wetland if pasture was not permitted. Shapiro explained that constructing a pond within a wetland may be considered exempt under the agricultural exemption, but only if the pond is essential to the farming operation. Shapiro also said that depending on the size of the pond, the applicant may also be required to consult with the US Army Corps of Engineers regarding the wetland alteration. Commissioners discussed that while using a wetland area for pasture is not necessarily a regulated activity, the very saturated nature of this particular area would likely require deposition of fill into the wetland, which would be regulated.

Joan Formeister said that if John Gale wants to continue with his present plan, then the public hearing has to be scheduled as we are running out of time to legally handle this application.

Greg Genlot made a motion to schedule a public hearing at 7:00 p.m. on July 1, 2015, prior to our regular meeting regarding Application #684 – 329 Billings Road regarding grading/filling for pasture within wetland and stormwater discharge within upland review area, Fawn Hill Farm LLC. This motion was seconded by Dan Fraro and unanimously approved by the Commission.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Designate new wetland agent

Dan Fraro made a motion to designate Joanna Shapiro as the new Wetland Agent for the Town of Somers. This motion was seconded by Greg Genlot and unanimously approved by the Commission.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

There was none.

V. STAFF REPORT:

Shapiro presented her report to the Commission, which included David Askew's final activities as wetland agent, as well as her own first couple of weeks as agent. Shapiro said that she would be working Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the Town Hall, and might amend these hours, depending on the activity in the Town.

Henry Broer made a motion to approve Joanna Shapiro's report, as presented. Dan Fraro seconded the motion, unanimously approved by the Commission.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE AND BILLS:

Shapiro said there was one new Journal Inquirer bill to be paid, but she didn't have it with her.

Dan Fraro made a motion to pay the Journal Inquirer bill, seconded by Candace Aleks and unanimously approved by the Commission.

VII. MINUTES APPROVAL: May 6, 2015

Dan Fraro made a motion to approve the minutes of 5/6/15, as presented. This motion was seconded by Greg Genlot, unanimously approved by the Commission.

Candace Aleks asked Shapiro if she would please forward all minutes to those members of the Commission who were unable to attend the meeting.

Candace Aleks made a motion to add the following items to the agenda; seconded by Lise Wood and unanimously approved by the Commission.

VIII. CURRENT CONSERVATION BUDGET ENDING 6/30/15 AND NEW CONSERVATION BUDGET BEGINNING 7/1/2015

Joan Formeister asked Joanna Shapiro when the Commission will approve the new budget for the next fiscal year. Our next meeting is not until July 1st. Joanna will check on this and let the Commission know.

Formeister also said that in the current Conservation budget, there is a line item listing the availability of two or three hundred dollars to be donated to an ongoing Conservation project. Shapiro did not know the intended recipient of this donation but will contact David Askew to find out.

Dan Fraro made a motion to approve the awarding of the money in this line item to the recipient that David Askew has identified. This motion was seconded by Candace Aleks and unanimously voted by the Commission.

IX. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn made by Dan Fraro, seconded by Lise Wood and unanimously voted by the Commission. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candace Aleks, Secretary

Connie Carenzo, Recording Secretary

MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVAL AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING.