

**COVENTRY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2022**

CALL TO ORDER

By: Jobbagy

Time: 7:06p.m.

Place: Virtual

ROLL CALL:

		PRESENT	ABSENT
REGULAR MEMBERS:	Steven Hall, Secretary	X	
	Bill Jobbagy, Chairperson	X	
	Ed Marek	X	
	Christine Pattee, Vice Chairperson	X	
	Darby Pollansky	X	
ALTERNATE MEMBERS:	Bob Burrington	X	
	Carol Polsky	X	
	Arianna Mouradijan		X
STAFF:	Eric Trott, Town Planner	X	

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:

None

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 8-24 – Town purchase of open space property owned by Conway on South River Road.

Staff provided details on a proposal involving an offer to the Town to purchase a parcel of land on South River Road as open space.

In November 2021, the Town was approached by Seth Conway, who owns a vacant property on South Road that was purchased to construct a single family residence. Unfortunately, the cost to design and construct, and the process required to address flood plain requirements caused him to not pursue his project.

The property is six acres in area and possesses a significant amount of frontage on the Skungamaug River, as well as sensitive wetlands and flood plain areas. The current and former owners have managed the site effectively by tending to the open field, road access - driveway, parking area, and informal walking trails along the river's edge. The property lends itself very well to public access and enjoyment.

The former owner pursued an Inland Wetlands Agency approval to construct a residence on the property, but did not pursue the Planning and Zoning Commission permits relative to flood plain activity. In 2011, the former owner offered the property to the Town to purchase as open space in the amount of \$140,000.00. The Town did not pursue the offer due to a lack of sufficient funds, although the property was recognized as valuable from an open space and environmental protection standpoint.

In November 2021, Staff contacted Joshua's Trust to inquire if the organization would be interested in partnering in the purchase of the property. The Trust and Town have a long and positive history in collaborating to protect significant open space properties. Staff communicated and met with Trust volunteers on several occasions to share details about the property in order for the Acquisitions Committee and Executive Board to have adequate details and consider the proposal. In mid-January 2022, the Trust informed Staff that they would be willing to donate \$5,000.00 to the purchase, as long as the property was to be preserved permanently as open space.

The property is noted in the Town Plan of Conservation and Development as significant and worthy of permanent preservation as indicated on the Preservation Focus Area Map – section 4. Please see attached. The Report of the Coventry Open Space Working Group (revised February 2020) also supports this goal.

The property is adjacent to the DiGiulio property. It is Staff's understanding that a preservation easement was acquired over a portion of the property by the American Farmland Trust several years ago. The property to the south is owned by Kortmann. Staff has had conversations with Kortmann about a future subdivision on that property and the prospects of conveying open space to the Town along the Skungamaug River. The Town owns a property adjacent to the Kortmann property to the south. To the north and east of the property is land owned by VonHirshberg. Their property has extensive horseback riding trails that extend to the River. It is Staff's understanding that these trails are protected by private recreational easements. These collective properties provide an extensive network of current and future protected open space when combined with the Conway property.

DECISIONS:

Motion: The Coventry Planning and Zoning Commission recommends that the Town Council proceed with the purchase of the Conway property on South River Road as open space pursuant to CGS 8-24. The property is recognized as significant from a natural resource perspective and the purchase meets the goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development and Open Space Report.

By: Pattee

Seconded: Hall

Voting:

For: Hall, Pattee, Marek, Pollansky, Jobbagy

Against: None

Abstain: None

ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

1. January 10, 2022

Motion: The Coventry Planning and Zoning Commission approves the minutes of the January 24, 2022, meeting.

By: Pattee

Seconded: Marek

With the following corrections:

None.

Voting:

For: Hall, Pattee, Marek, Pollansky, Jobbagy

Against: None

Abstain: None

COMMUNICATIONS:

None

STAFF REPORTS:

1. Housing Affordability Plan preparation – website and survey launch

Staff: Today the Housing Affordability Plan website and survey was launched. An e-blast was sent out last month and again this month about the launch. The Town Manager’s Facebook page will also help to spread the word.

The website will serve as the landing spot for all of the materials associated with the Plan development for easy access and a centralized location for dissemination of information.

A community workshop is being planned for the 3rd or 4th week of March. The Housing Needs Assessment is being reviewed and commented on by the Subcommittee.

It was noted by Polsky that there have been some negative comments about the Plan surfacing on Facebook. Trott asked Polsky to forward them to him so that they can be shared with the consultant. This will provide a clearer idea on the need for education and advocacy with the Plan as it is being developed.

2. Cannabis Establishment regulations – memo to Town Council

Staff: The Town Council reviewed the Commission’s letter requesting the Council’s position on the matter. The Council voted 5-2 to recognize the Commission’s intent to proceed with the development of Zoning Regulations to manage cannabis establishments and does not oppose the Commission’s intention.

Town Staff and the PZC Chairman will begin reviewing relevant sample regulations and work to develop materials that can be shared with the Commission.

3. Accessory Dwelling Units regulations – draft revision preparation

Staff: Staff continues to work with the Town Attorney to get the application ready which involves some language changes. A Zoning Regulation Amendment application is expected to be ready for acknowledgement at the Commission’s second meeting in February.

ENFORCEMENT:

Staff reported that the Chipkins – Cassidy Hill Winery have hired a consulting engineering firm to work on addressing the various matters relative to their Special Permit compliance. The consultant has visited the Town Hall to review relevant files and has spoken to the Chief of Police, Town Sanitarian, and Planner. They expect to have application materials ready in the coming weeks. Staff will suggest that a preliminary meeting be held with the Commission to iron out the details in advance of a formal application.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

- 1. Special Permit application William Younge to demolish and reconstruct a single family residence at 261 Woodland Road.**

ADJOURNMENT:

Jobbagy adjourned the meeting at 7:38p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eric M. Trott

Eric M. Trott, Director of Planning and Development

PLEASE NOTE: These minutes are not official until approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission at the next Commission meeting. Please see the next Commission meeting minutes for approval or changes to these minutes.