

Conservation Advisory Commission
Minutes of the December 20, 2012 Meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Steve Appel, Michael Restuccia, Victor Lamoureux, Cynthia Stephens-Westerman

Excused: Shep Bennett, Cole Moore, Linda Green, Dick Pastore

Minutes of the November 15 meeting were approved by e-mail vote. The next regular meeting of the CAC will be on January 17, 2013.

The previous month's meeting with Supervisor Schaffer was reviewed, and his request that the CAC draft a management plan for the Town parks was extensively discussed. The nature and uses of the numerous Town parks are diverse, and it would be necessary to identify particular goals for each park. For the larger parks, this is a particularly complex task. A Jones Park plan would require numerous individual components that would address particular parts and features of the park: the stream corridor, the spruce and pine plantations, the mowed slope, the former firing range, the area containing the endangered fern species, etc. All these separate components would then have to be united in an overall plan. Decisions would have to be made about whether to make the park as natural as possible or to provide educational and historical perspectives. For example, the brick chimney, which is a landmark in the trail system, could become an interpretative feature used to help describe the history of past land use in Vestal, or it could be viewed as an unnatural features that should eventually be removed. Very wide discussions, involving a variety of stakeholders and possible resources (for example, the Town Historian) would be essential. In matters such as this, rather than a specific recommendation, we might present a set of alternative choices.

To better understand the necessary and desirable elements of a management plan for a park or similar public spaces, the CAC might begin by exploring the web for existing management plans that could serve as appropriate models. This approach would provide some idea of the scope of such a project, and we would have to assess whether we can muster the time and expertise needed to carry out the project.

Plans to build a new senior care facility on West Sheedy Road to replace the facility destroyed by the flood were discussed. That fact that facility is being sited near a floodplain was noted.

Cindy reported that the Environmental Management Council is most likely not going to support the Joyce and Paul Smith Photo Show this year. The work to put on the show is too much for the Environmental Analyst assigned to the EMC to handle. The EMC is looking for other groups or individuals which would be willing to take over some of the show preparation duties and become co-sponsors. If such groups can be found in the next few months, it might be possible to have a show in 2013, but prospects are not good.

Cindy is willing to continue as the CAC representative to the EMC, but the meeting time of 4:30 on Wednesday is inconvenient, and she would like to have an alternate representative who could attend when she can not.