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DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes of Thursday January 24, 2008
Durham Town Office – Council Chambers
7:00 PM

Regular Members Present: Cynthia Belowski, Julian Smith, George Thomas,
Stephen Roberts, Duane Hyde, Jim Hellen

Alternate Members Present: Dwight Baldwin, Peter Smith

Regular Members Excused: Beryl Harper

Alternate Members Excused: Robin Vranicar

Public Attendees: None

1) Call the meeting to order and acknowledge absentees and those with voting authority.

Cynthia Belowski called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. It was noted that Dwight Baldwin will vote in Beryl Harper's absence.

Cynthia Belowski suggested amending the agenda to add a discussion of the Commission's site walk on 1/24/08 at 275 Durham Point Road.

Peter Smith moved to accept the agenda as amended. This was seconded by Duane Hyde and approved unanimously.

1a) Site Walk on January 24, 2008 at 275 Durham Point Road

George Thomas noted that Glen from Pickering Engineering had been present at the site walk to discuss specifics of the proposed dock with the Commission members. The project consists of a 6 ft by 6 ft concrete pad, a removable 50 ft ramp gangway leading up to a float. The existing crib dock will be removed and the new dock will be placed in a different location. It was the consensus of the Commission to direct George Thomas to reply to the DES that the Commission has no objections to the proposed project. George will cc the Commission on his correspondence to DES.

2) Workshop Discussion –

a) Review and discuss land conservation priorities – The discussion began with Cynthia Belowski presenting three copies of a property map to assist the members with their discussion. She explained the color coding of the map and what was and was not represented

1 on the map. The Commission discussed the map and familiarized themselves with the
2 properties represented on the map. Duane Hyde presented a map that he had drawn up which
3 represented his view of potential conservation areas. He explained the color coding of this
4 map and reviewed different areas of the map and if the area is currently protected or if
5 another conservation group is currently focusing on proceeding with a plan to protect the
6 area. Each highlighted area of the map was also discussed with regard to its specific
7 conservation value. Stephen Roberts suggested adding numbers to the properties listed on
8 the map and referencing the numbers with descriptive paragraphs and its priority status. He
9 noted that this would be a good way to present a large amount of information to the Town
10 Council. Dwight Baldwin cautioned that the Commission may be asked by the Council if
11 there isn't enough land already protected in town (especially if you include University land
12 and Fish and Game land). He suggested the Commission be able to explain specific parcels
13 as being unique, that justify ongoing conservation efforts. Stephen suggested the approach of
14 showing all the areas that are important, and then make a small selection within that larger
15 list. He felt this would show that the Commission is being restrained and discerning by
16 selecting only a few areas. Peter Smith urged the Commission to state specifically which
17 areas are considered as highest priority and the reasoning for such a designation. Jim Hellen
18 noted that part of the charge of the Commission is to keep an index of open spaces and to
19 identify potential areas of conservation. The areas identified may also be of interest to other
20 conservation entities and may be involved in short term or long term plans. Peter suggested
21 making the point that the Commission takes seriously the obligation of their charter and a
22 central feature is to globally develop a conservation master plan and identify and prioritize
23 items. He noted that the Commission should point out that the Commission is being
24 systematic about developing long term conservation plans in the town and that in order to
25 accomplish this, the Commission needs to survey, identify and then put values on properties.
26 Duane suggested that one way of placing value on properties, is to look at the areas on the
27 map that the Commission feels are of value, but no other conservation entity is currently
28 addressing. This would suggest, that if this property is to be conserved, the Durham
29 Conservation Commission needs to take the lead. The Commission discussed properties they
30 felt were of the highest priority in need of their efforts. These properties are: Spruce Hole,
31 Tecce (across from Spruce Hole), Beach Hill Area, Gangweir property (hopefully already
32 accomplished), Mill Pond Center field, and the farm on Bennett Road area. Jim suggested
33 that the Commission should start by presenting the larger picture to the Council and then
34 narrow down the emphasis to these properties, explaining that any action taken may be years
35 in the future. Julian agreed, saying that the Commission should explain that they are talking
36 about long range plans. Dwight noted that the properties being discussed are important in
37 terms of water quality. Duane agreed saying that the resource values in these areas are
38 drinking water protection and prime agricultural soils, which are important to the town.

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40 The Commission discussed what format the meeting with the Town Council on March 3rd
41 would take and how much time they would have to present to the Council. Julian will
42 inquire and report back to the Commission. The members also discussed that there will be a
43 change in the Town Council members after elections in April and raised the issue of waiting
44 to meet with the Council until the new members are seated. It was decided that Cynthia
45 would speak with Todd Selig about changing the date of the meeting.

1 b) Review the Policy for Acquiring Legal Interest in Conservation/Open Space Land -- The
2 Commission members reviewed and discussed the draft of this policy and the suggested
3 revisions. Julian noted that a copy of the Draft Policy should be included in the Town
4 Council packet. Cynthia noted that item 7 V (which is deleted in the Commission's draft)
5 should not be in the document. Peter agreed, saying that the Commission did not seek to
6 create a document that would deal with the financial issues of the whole town, but to create a
7 document dealing with acquiring conservation/open space land.

8
9 c) Final review of priority list of Town-owned lands proposed for updated management plans
10 – The Commission members reviewed which properties were in need of monitoring and
11 management plans. Duane noted that the Commission needs to have a list of properties that
12 will be monitored this year and in subsequent years – whether they are easements or town-
13 owned land. It was decided that a list would be made available for the next meeting and
14 would be used to determine who would be responsible for monitoring each property. The
15 Commission also discussed the need to create an endowment fund for the monitoring of
16 certain properties. Duane explained that a separate easement monitoring account can be
17 created that will accrue interest and may be used if necessary. He noted that this needs to be
18 discussed with the Town Council.

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20 d) Discussion of other points that should be included in the Commission's recommendations
21 ...Julian will write up a communication to the Council asking them to explore the
22 establishment of an Agricultural Commission. He will discuss this with the Council and see
23 if they would like to proceed to the next step.

24 ...Cynthia noted that several people have suggested having nature walks on town owned
25 land/easements. She said she felt this would be a good outreach and education program.
26 Duane agreed and suggested that the Land Protection Working Group be included in this
27 process. Cynthia suggested that the Commission work with the Land Protection Group to get
28 these walks happening this spring.

29 ...The Commission discussed the need to begin work on setting criteria for monitoring and
30 working on writing a request for proposals and getting quotes. Duane volunteered to assist in
31 this process and encouraged other members to join him. Jim asked if there were any preset
32 criteria for monitoring property. Cynthia replied that there are standard forms which can be
33 used. Julian offered to assist Duane with the writing.

34 ...Cynthia suggested that the Commission write a list of actions items and who will be
35 responsible for each item.

36George suggested for the next meeting, that the Commission have the list of lands that
37 need to be monitored and to use this to determine who will be responsible for which
38 property.

39 40 **3) Administrative**

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42 a) Next regular meeting February 14, 2008 at 7 PM in Town Hall. Cynthia noted that she
43 will be unable to attend the February 14th meeting and that Duane Hyde will chair the
44 meeting. She indicated that the trail issue and the recommendation for changes to the
45 ordinance from Jim Campbell would be on the agenda for the February 14th meeting.

1 **4) Adjournment –**

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3 *Jim Hellen moved to adjourn at 9:15 pm. This was seconded by Dwight Baldwin and*
4 *approved unanimously.*

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6 The January 24th, 2008 meeting of the Durham Conservation Commission adjourned at 9:15
7 pm.

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11 Respectfully submitted by,

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18 Sue Lucius
19 Durham Conservation Commission Recording Secretary
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