

TOWN OF SOUTH KINGSTOWN CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

A regular meeting of the South Kingstown Conservation Commission was held in the Town Council Chambers on Wednesday, March 3, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Loomis – absent	Johnson – present	Boardman – absent
Gates – present	Dickinson - present	Flanders – present
Wettlaufer - present		

Mr. Gates chaired the meeting in Ms. Boardman's absence

B. Approval of Minutes of February 3, 2010

Johnson moved, Flanders seconded; motion carried: "To approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 3, 2010 as presented."

VOTE: Flanders - aye Dickinson – aye Johnson – aye Gates - aye

C. Special Items

1. WPWA Wild and Scenic Rivers Designation

Denise Poyer was present representing the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA). Ms. Poyer gave a power point presentation outlining the reasons why the WPWA proposes to seek Wild/Scenic River designation for certain rivers within the watershed. She noted that three of those rivers impact South Kingstown. Those rivers being the Queen, Chipuxet and Pawcatuck. She stated that, at this time, the WPWA is seeking support for a bill that would provide federal funding to undertake a study to determine if the subject water courses meet the applicable designation criteria. The National Park Service would either undertake the study or provide funds to WPWA so that the group could contract with qualified consultants to do the work.

Ms. Poyer stated that if the study results indicate that the rivers meet the wild/scenic designation eligibility then the WPWA would formally request federal designation for those water bodies. She stated that WPWA is requesting support from municipalities regarding the proposed funding bill, as well as, wild/scenic river designation.

Johnson moved, Flanders seconded; motion carried: "To forward a communication to the Town Council indicating that the South Kingstown Conservation Commission has reviewed the proposal of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association to seek Wild and Scenic designation for the Wood, Beaver, Queen, Chipuxet and Pawcatuck rivers. The Conservation Commission supports the efforts of WWPA for a federal bill to provide

federal authorization and funding to study those rivers to determine if they meet the criteria to be designated as Wild and Scenic. Further, the Conservation Commission would recommend that the South Kingstown Town Council prepare and forward a letter of support to the WWPA concerning these matters.”

VOTE: Flanders – aye Wettlaufer – aye Dickinson – aye Johnson aye

2. Discussion: Aquaculture Ecology in Salt Ponds

Dr. Michael Rice (URI, Professor – Fisheries and Aquaculture) and Mr. David Beutel (CRMC, Aquaculture Coordinator) were present to discuss the topic of aquaculture and how such operations may or may not impact the ecology of the salt ponds.

Dr. Rice noted that during warmer month such as August there is an increase in fouling organisms within the ponds, however, this coincides with an increase in fish populations that remove those organisms. As such, there is not net increase in fouling organisms.

He further stated that during the filter feeding process shellfish (i.e. oysters) filter roughly one half gallon on water per hour. This filtering and ingestions process results in increased waste material generation from the shellfish, however, those waste products are rapidly dispersed. Therefore, they do not constitute a significant pollution problem.

Dr. Rice stated that significant bio-fouling impacts are an issue in much larger aquaculture operations than those found in the United States. For example, the density of operations in some areas of Spain and Norway result in significant bio-fouling problems.

Mr. Beutel informed members that the aquaculture operation applicant is required to prepare an Operations Plan. He noted that aquaculture in the salt ponds is presently comprised of “rack and bag” methods where shellfish are located near bottom, or operations where the shellfish sit naturally on the pond bottom. As such, there are only limited, if any, projects where racks are located within the water column. These reduces bio-fouling potential, as well as, impediments to water flow.

Mr. Gates inquired as to whether any water quality testing (in relation to aquaculture operations) has been undertaken. Dr. Rice responded that Bob Rheault has performed such testing and determined no significant negative impacts to water quality have resulted.

Members asked if aquaculture activities impacts sediment and or water flow. Dr. Rice noted that the greatest impact to water flow velocity increase are winter winds. Again, Mr. Beutel noted that aquaculture operations in the salt ponds are mainly bottom operations.

Mr. Beutel briefed members on the present ad hoc State aquaculture working group. He noted that the extent of aquaculture in the salt ponds is limited to a 5% area threshold. At

present aquaculture occupies 2.8% and less than 1.0% of the total area within Pt. Judith Pond and Potter Pond respectively.

In response to Commission questions regarding user conflicts Mr. Beutel noted that CRMC requires all aquaculture operations be clearly marked to avoid navigational problems with vessels.

Regarding Commission concerns over potential impacts to winter flounder populations Mr. Beutel stated that research indicates aquaculture operations provide good habitat for juvenile flounders.

2. Discussion: Town Tree Nursery

Dr. Brian Maynard (URI) was present to discuss this matter with the Commission. Dr. Maynard has assisted in development of the Pot In Pot method used at other municipal tree nurseries. He informed members that this method involves growing the stock in pots, but noted that this methodology is not successful for those sites that have high seasonal water tables.

Dr. Maynard stated that normally #15 and #35 pots are used. He recommended the Town buy bare root stock which is significantly more economical than bagged stock. He noted that using bare root stock with the Pot In Pot approach uses considerably less space. He estimated the Town could grow approximately 100 trees per 1,000 square feet of area.

Discussion ensued regarding the potential use of the Highway Department Maintenance Facility on Asa Pond Road. Dr. Maynard stressed the need to pick a site where a reliable water supply is available and preferably fenced areas are present to provide protection from deer.

Further discussion ensued regarding use of a system where by water and fertilizer application rates can be closely controlled and monitored.

Dr. Maynard did note that one disadvantage of the Pot In Pot system is that the growing period is limited and leaving trees within pots an additional year is counter productive to the overall goal of the nursery.

Discussion ensued concerning operational and start-up costs. Dr. Maynard estimated that a small irrigation system would cost between \$500 to \$1000. He stated that the annual costs for fertilizer and growing media would be \$200 each. Dr. Maynard estimates the cost of bare root stock to be \$7.50 to \$20 per tree.

Mr. Flanders stated the need to establish a time line for the project. He also noted the need to identify supervisory responsibilities. Mr. Nickerson will talk with the Parks Superintendent regarding availability of staff.

Commission members were in agreement that Mr. Flanders should serve as the Tree Board liaison to the Town.

D. Renewable Energy Resources

Mr. Nickerson provided a brief update of present ARRA initiatives, noting staff has met with various ESCO representatives regarding energy efficiency at municipal buildings and schools.

Mr. Gates reiterated the need to investigate advantages in taking a regional approach. Mr. Nickerson will discuss this matter further with the Director of Planning.

E. Tree Board

There were no other matters besides the Town Tree Nursery discussion.

F. Wastewater Management

Mr. Nickerson indicated his goal is to provide the requested On-Site Wastewater Management Program status report at next months meeting. He stated he has met with the present OWWM Specialist to iron out issues with the reporting and data entry tasks.

G. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

H. Other Matters / Comments

There were no other matters noted.

K. Adjournment

Flanders moved, Johnson seconded; motion carried: "To Adjourn".

Meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.