



**TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
LAND ACQUISITION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES – DRAFT
January 22, 2020**

Present: Michael Widmer, Jeff Galdenzi, Bob Daly, Linda Batchelder, Adam Goodman, Tara Hawley, Trey Bickers, Kevin Helmich, and Conservation Director Brian Carey.

I. Call Meeting to Order

Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10pm in the John J Sullivan Independence Hall 1st Floor conference room.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Approval of Minutes

Batchelder motioned and Galdenzi seconded to approve the October 9, 2019 meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. 2020 LAC Officer Elections

- a. **Chair – Michael Widmer**
- b. **Vice Chair – Jeff Galdenzi**
- c. **Secretary – Adam Goodman**

Daly motioned to maintain the current slate of officers and reappoint the above-mentioned members. Galdenzi seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

V. Chairman's Report

- a. **Welcome New Members** – Kevin Helmich (real estate), Trey Bickers (CPA)
Widmer inquired if everyone has been sworn in and all nodded affirmatively.

- b. **Current Vacancies – Alternate (term is up in November)**

One alternate position is still available.

- c. **State of CT Open Space Funding**

Widmer passed around a January 8, 2020 Patch article announcing that the State put aside \$9M to support grants for open space funding. Carey explained that he thinks the State is back funding grants based on a December CT Examiner article. The State added \$5M in 2019, but delayed 2020 announcement funding.

- d. **TPZ Plan of Conservation & Development public workshops**

The TPZ is having public workshops to assist in updating the local Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), which is reviewed every 10 years for the town to remain eligible for State grants. These workshops will help to establish goals for open space preservation, conservation, and will be helpful identifying areas of future economic growth/development. Planning for sea level rise will be a big part of the discussion. Three workshops are available (Jan 29, Feb 4, Feb

6, all at 6:30pm) and pre-registration is required. The agendas are the same for all three meetings. There will be a discussion of slides and then people will break out into groups. Zoning regulation changes and direction of development are based on this document. Authorship of the POCD resides with the TPZ and needs to be ratified by the board and RTM.

Widmer encouraged board to participate. Carey encouraged us to write comments to the town assistant planner because our role as an advisory board is to advise them on these matters.

e. LAC Charter/Mission Statement

Widmer passed out the Land Acquisition Commission charter/mission statement and duties. These include developing a comprehensive plan to acquire 70 acres of open space for each 1,000 residents. Galdenzi inquired about a change to the charter to include funding for the commission. Widmer explained that when the LAC formed in 1997 there was an initial funding, but the town hasn't provided any consistent formal funding since except State grants that Carey has procured. This should be a topic for discussion in 2020.

VI. New Business

a. 3724 Post Road & 3726 Post Road

Mike handed out a letter from Sasquanaug Southport, a charitable organization committed to preserving and protecting Southport and its historical surroundings. The January 11, 2020 letter recommends the town acquire two properties for passive open space. Both properties were historically underwater in Bulkley Pond, but are now dry marshland since the earthen dam failed in September 2018. They are adjacent to the 5-acre Sasco Creek Open Space. Carey described these properties as a riparian area with little development pressure. He said there is no incentive to reinstall the dam. The two properties are appraised at \$16,300 and \$85,500, have annual taxes of \$305 and \$1603, and an arrearage of \$7,255 and \$34,600, respectively. The owners have not paid taxes on them since approximately 2004/2005. Both owners have liens against them and live out of state. The town could start a foreclosure action or maybe ask them to donate the properties. It is possible the owners don't know they own these properties.

Carey plans to talk with the town attorney and do a title search. He wants to see why it hasn't gone out for tax sale. Widmer suggested we table this while Carey talks to town attorney. Galdenzi thought we should investigate other properties with tax in the rears as opportunities to increase our open space inventory.

VII. Old Business

a. 995 South Pine Creek Road

This 0.27-acre property had hazardous waste cleaned up and remediated by the State in 1998 and is currently being environmentally monitored by CT DEEP. It is an approved building lot and is adjacent to town-owned open space. Carey spoke to the property owners about donating or selling the property to the town, but they aren't interested.

b. 760 Oldfield Road

Fairfield received a State DEEP grant for this property and the transaction closed with town expecting state reimbursement soon. The property was cleaned up in November and has received a donation from the Tucker Fund for the installation of a bird blind. Widmer and Carey agreed a ribbon cutting ceremony would help bring positive attention to what the LAC and Conservation Department are doing, perhaps in the spring when the bird blind is opened.

c. 150 Trail Street

This property sold and the transaction has been completed.

d. 1150 Westport Turnpike

This 3.66-acre property is a subdivision set aside for two undeveloped residential lots along Route 136. The property is adjacent to Brett Woods open space. Fairfield accepted ownership of this property in October when it was transferred by the RTM.

e. 145 Grace Street

This 0.11-acre property near the Nutmeg Bowl backs up to open space. The town may re-enter negotiations with the owner of this property, but it needs to go to RTM for approval.

f. 373 Cross Highway

This 2.21-acre property next to Binger Open Space and Timothy Dwight elementary school was appraised at \$38,000 and is still for sale. Wetlands dominate this property, but it is adjacent to open space. A State DEEP grant would cover 50%. Carey thought it was worth buying for preservation if a grant is available.

g. 3250 North Street

This 3.66-acre property abuts Brett Woods, is under transmission lines, has no septic or well, and has wetlands on half the property. The owner had a wetlands permit, but it has expired. The property has been on the market for a while. Appraisal is \$200,000 and the property was on the market for \$225,000. Carey doesn't know if State of CT DEEP grants will be available for use because they haven't come out yet. Carey will let us know if funding becomes available. This property is a good candidate to add to our open space inventory.

VIII. Adjournment

Galdenzi motioned for adjournment and Goodman seconded. Widmer called the meeting at 7:20pm. Next meeting is on April 22, 2020.

Respectively submitted by,

Adam Goodman Secretary, LAC