

Conservation remains an important island issue

By Robert Morton-Ranney

The Conservation Commission, at their June 12 meeting, discussed the Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) designation.

Chairman Chris Powell reported that a letter had been sent to Ellen Winsor, head of Conanicut Concerned Citizens (formerly North End Concerned Citizens) requesting information on communications between their group and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) indicating that the EPA has rescinded earlier versions of the SSA application and removed it from their files. Powell added that to date the commission has had no response to the letter.

Commissioner Patrick Driscoll said the commission does not want to be in the position of holding up the designation and other commissioners agreed. New commissioner Kate Smith asked whether the SSA had been "married to" the highway barn question. Powell replied that it was originally, but now it is separate.

Driscoll said that he emailed to Powell the town's Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Plan. Powell explained that this is a document that uses the Comprehensive Plan as a foundation and included more detailed information about these spaces. It is approved by the Town Council and used by the Planning Commission.

Driscoll raised the question of whether an SSA designation would impact the Comprehensive Plan. Smith said "people don't get it" when it comes to water conservation. Only a few days before, she said, she had seen lawn sprinklers turned on in the rain, and children using outdoor hoses in water play. Talancy said education is one of the things SSA would hope to accomplish.

The commission welcomed new member Kate Smith to the meeting. In introducing herself, Smith indicated she is originally from New York and moved to Jamestown two years ago following eighteen years in Cranston. While in Cranston, she served on the Historic District Commission and helped found the land trust there, serving as its president for five years. During that time, the trust helped create the Historic Scenic Farm Route of Cranston, which is now a part of Cranston's Comprehensive Plan.

Smith loves Jamestown and is very interested in being part of conservation efforts here. She said she sees Jamestown as "a harbinger of what can be done conserva-

tion-wise."

In new commission business, Chairman Chris Powell noted two new applications for the construction of docks on waterfront properties, both of which are in compliance with current regulations. Commissioner Jennifer Talancy reminded the group of the need to discuss the proliferation of docks in Jamestown, citing the commission's concern for the preservation of eelgrass beds around the island, and Powell indicated it will be part of the agenda for the next meeting.

Commissioner Mark Baker reported that the trails guide has just gone to press and will be ready soon. Powell said he checked with the "powers-that-be" and they agreed to a \$1 charge for each guide. Rhode Island's Department of Transportation disperses the \$7,600 in grant money, originally awarded the by the Department of Environmental Management, and officials there indicated that a charge would be fine as long as monies earned went into a protected account to be used for trail maintenance. Baker said guides will be available at the usual public and commercial outlets and distribution would be limited to Jamestown.

Powell asked Smith if she would be the commission's designee on the Harbor Management Commission, and she accepted. Powell said the Conservation Commission's interest is in making sure that areas designated as protected, stay protected. Trocki added that public rights-of-way also need to be monitored.

Commissioner Cathy Roheim presented a fresh draft for an advertisement about Rhode Island's Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act, intended to conserve undeveloped land by reducing the tax burden of owners. Everyone agreed on the text, and Smith will do graphics. The commission decided to spend up to \$200 for one-time or multiple-use ads. Roheim's suggestion that an ad be timed with the town's reminder of fourth-quarter tax due dates was welcomed.

Trocki reported that Town Administrator Bruce Keiser had "signed off" on the funding plan for the Round Marsh Restoration Project. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, the federal agency awarding the grant, will determine project timelines, and construction will probably begin in March 2009. Powell asked about including a bird pool. Trocki said

the current plan is to disperse sediment. If too much is done and fill is disturbed it must be tested and disposed of, and if it is contaminated disposal becomes problematic.

In other business, Driscoll, who is tree committee liaison, mentioned his disappointment that David Nickerson would no longer be tree warden, as Driscoll saw him as knowledgeable and motivated. Powell reported that a letter of support has been sent to Save The Bay regarding their Scallop Restoration Project. Powell also noted that dune grass will be planted at Mackerel Cove in the fall, to replace that lost in recent storms. Driscoll distributed materials on the proposed Fort Getty Master Plan, to be discussed at the next meeting.

Powell said he has spoken with Wind Energy Committee Chairman Don Wineberg about changing meeting schedules, which are currently simultaneous, in order to facilitate the attendance of designated commission observer Roheim, and it would be discussed. Powell

also said he would follow up with the Scouts regarding the Hull Cove project. Talancy said she will walk some of the town trails soon to determine maintenance needs.

In other business, Baker mentioned the town's consideration of "Form-Based Planning" as part of the upcoming zoning ordinance review. He said the commission should keep a close eye on it, as it may effect open space, and Powell said he would put it on the agenda for the next meeting. Baker also attended Tick Awareness Day and said he was concerned about recommendations for the spraying of the chemical permethrin. Baker sent a letter to the editor of the Jamestown Press expressing his concerns, and commission agreed the letter was good.

Powell said the Osprey project is making progress, and the commission's new budget of \$2,200 has been approved.

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