

**NORWALK CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES**

JUNE 9, 2004

**OPEN SPACE FORUM**

**ATTENDANCE:** Karen Destefanis, Chairman; Matthew Caputo; Jane Corcillo; Ed Holowinko; Susan Lorrca; Elizabeth Ackerman; Seeley Hubbard (7:25 pm) Anne Cagnina

**STAFF:** Alexis Cherichetti

Ms. Destefanis called the hearing to order at 7:05 pm. She said this is their public hearing on open space that the Commission has been working on for several months. She introduced Ms. Corcillo.

Ms. Corcillo stated that open space is a dwindling resource and they have come up with a plan to lead Norwalk into the 21st Century and by doing this they hope to accomplish the following. In going over the plan, they invite input from all members of the public so that all needs are met. They are going to propose action for preserving open space, make an inventory of the open space that is still available and in this way they can lay the groundwork for a long-term plan that will balance the needs for development and conservation and the quality of life; she added that the plan is designed to have a proactive approach.

Together Ms. Corcillo and Ms. Cherichetti presented the following:

Four Key Steps of the plan

Overall goals of open space

Natural resource protection and management

Outdoor recreation

Protection of public health and safety

Promotion of community character and quality of life

Two kinds of open space

Why update the open space inventory

Nomination form

How will the register of open space properties work

Ranking and prioritizing properties

Mr. Hubbard joined the meeting at 7:25 pm.

Proposed actions

Techniques for open space protections

What can I do

Ms. Destefanis thanked Ms. Corcillo and Ms. Cherichetti for the presentation and opened for any questions or comments from the public.

Betsy Bain, Council member, said with regard to zoning, could this department help to identify parcels and are to be zoned for further development.

Ms. Cherichetti said the draft is fairly recent, however all Land Use Board have received copies of it. She said at some point they hope to do a presentation for the Zoning Commission.

Ms. Bain applauded the work of the proposed plan noting that it was useful to see where everything fits into the big picture. She referred to the public having the option to inform the Commission about open space saying that some parcels might be missed because the public just isn't aware of them.

Ms. Cherichetti explained that there is a current inventory of open spaces, they would not be starting from scratch; she added that they have been in discussion with Planning and Zoning on this topic.

William Wrenn, President of the Norwalk Land Trust said it was great to see this getting done and that it was a shame it hadn't been done years ago. He said they have been working parallel to the Commission as they are the second largest owner of open space in the city – he said they would like to add property to the Commission's inventory. Mr. Wrenn said it would be nice to see a place where the Commission could partner with such groups as the Norwalk Land Trust and other neighborhood organizations on achieving goals. He said one of the goals was getting funding from the city to buy properties and they could help with that. He also suggested that they look at other communities to see what they are doing to protect open space. Mr. Wrenn concluded by saying that he hopes the Land Trust can help and further suggested an open space sub-committee in going forward.

John Grinham referred to the attribute sheet regarding the non-replace ability of property and if there was an attribute for this.

There was discussion on the attribute sheet.

Diane Lauricella representing the League of Women Voters said she liked the attribute sheet and asked if there was a section that would allow properties to be swapped. She said this was another way to add to the inventory of open space.

Ms. Cherichetti said the attribute sheet is just a tool and not a law; it is used to help them assess areas.

Ms. Lauricella asked if there was any way this could be expedited, as there have been many parcels that are under threat of being sold. She said she was glad to see the Commission reaching out to the public, as there are many people in the city who would be willing to assist the Commission so this process could be completed more quickly. Ms. Lauricella said the Commission would also require legal assistance in dealing with sensitive projects; also that once they have the inventory of open spaces, they should designate them formally as that makes it harder for a parcel to become developed. She reiterated her point about the importance of public comment and that the Commission should talk to the public more often.

Mr. Caputo referred to the section on the attribute sheet about land exchanges and said the Conservation Commission has had many public hearings in the past.

Ms. Destefanis said she looked forward to receiving nominations of open space and they would keep all of the public's comments under advisement. She thanked the public for coming out and speaking. She also thanked Ms. Cherichetti.

The hearing was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Kye

Telesco Secretarial

