

Town of Verona
Open Space and Parks Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 1, 2015

Present: Keen, Mathies, Stellick, Hoffman, and Maxwell

Absent: Siehr

Also Present: Ron Endres (departed 8:25 PM), Rich Henderson (departed 8:25 PM), John Wright, Clerk-Treasurer (C-T)

Called to order at 7:31 PM

Approval of Agenda

Mathies moved to approve the agenda; 2nd Maxwell. Motion to approve the agenda carried.

Public Comments

Chair Keen reported on a Natural Resource trip that took place the preceding week. He also noted the need for tree removals along local navigable waterways at State Highway 69 and Riverside Road, Sunset Road, and Range Trail.

Approval of Minutes

Maxwell moved to approve the June minutes as presented; 2nd Mathies. Member Stellick abstained as he was not in attendance at the June meeting. Motion to accept the minutes from the June 3, 2015 meeting as presented carried.

Discussion Regarding Repurposing the Retained Acreage of Town Land Purchased for the Proposed Town Hall/Public Works Facilities Including Prairie Restoration

Ron Endres and Rich Henderson introduced themselves to the members of the OSPC. Chair Keen asked the pair if they had any thoughts regarding prairie restoration. Member Maxwell noted that the Town (per discussion earlier today with designers and engineers) will likely retain up to 5.3 acres of the land they purchased on the south side of County Highway PD to the west of Country View Road. The guests reviewed a visualization of the site plan that included where the proposed Town Hall and Public Works buildings would be located. Chair Keen estimated between two to three acres would be available for prairie restoration. Member Maxwell was curious what soil preparation was necessary if any.

Mr. Endres stated that a Roundup-ready crop (e.g. corn/soybeans) could be planted for the next three years (corn twice, soybeans once). Native seeds could be put atop this cropland and worked into the soil. Mowing should be conducted at least annually to a height of 6-12 inches to prevent weeds from going to seed. By the third year some color would begin to emerge. Controlled burns should be conducted once every three years. Commercial prairie grass seed is available at an estimated cost of \$800-\$1,200 per acre. Endres suggested casting the mix in November so that the frost can help work it into the soil. The amount of attention given to preparatory work and the amount of legacy seed in the soil determines in large part the degree of success.

Mr. Henderson suggested that some seed can come from donations and listed some possible sources. He advocated for diversity of species. Henderson was willing to recommend which species are appropriate for the Town property retained after he has a chance to review the soil types and visiting the site. There was brief discussion of County land adjacent to Flagstone Park, located to the east of County Road M and north of Raymond Road where it intersects with County Road PD. Endres and Henderson consider this to be a good example of a diverse prairie. There was brief discussion on how to limit hazards associated with controlled burns; they can be mitigated by waiting until directionality and intensity of winds are favorable and through the strategic placing of mowed fire breaks. Both guests agreed that trees should be avoided adjacent to the restoration area as shade inhibits growth. Hybrid plantings and conifers should be avoided; conifers represent a risk during a controlled burn as they are flammable by nature. Walking trails can be seeded with Kentucky bluegrass or fescue.

Member Maxwell noted the possibility that one or all of the purchasers of the residual acres to be sold by the Town may also want to restore land to native prairie. There was brief discussion of invasive plant species and a list that has been prepared by the Town of Middleton that is available on their website: (http://town.middleton.wi.us/index.asp?SEC=71F2602B-6630-4A7A-B508-F718D2E3385F&Type=B_BASIC). Mr. Endres and Mr. Henderson stated they would review the proposed landscaping plan for the site when it becomes available to see if any items are in conflict with the proposed prairie restoration. Endres and Henderson noted that volunteers could spend two to three hours per year walking the prairie to spot invasives when they can easily be suppressed. Furthermore, volunteers could assist with controlled burns. Training may be available through the Blue Mounds Area Project (<http://www.bluemounds.org/>). There was brief discussion of success by a local Boy Scout Troop that prepared a prairie restoration site by covering the ground with carpeting scraps; the barrier remained in place for two years before it was removed.

Member Mathies inquired about devoting some of the retained acreage to oak savannah restoration. It was recommended that the prairie be established first. Tree species were recommended that support bird populations that include serviceberry and nannyberry. It was noted that ash tree plantings should be avoided. Mr. Endres left a seed catalogue for the Commission members from Prairie Moon Nursery. There was brief conversation regarding where the seeds are gathered geographically and any impact it can have upon the success of establishing a prairie; during the initial phase is less critical, but filling in patches in an established prairie is more successful using local sources. Member Hoffman asked about the impact of a drought in the year following seeding. The impact is minimal since only a portion of the scattered seed germinates each year.

Review Preliminary Certified Survey Maps

The members present reviewed the preliminary Certified Survey Map (CSM) for the Carmon Wilson property adjacent to Sugar River Road. They also had a map of slopes exceeding 12 percent for the site. This parcel currently has residential access to Sugar River Road. There is currently an existing home and no further development is being sought for the proposed parcel of 35.43 acres. The land to the west of the home is to be used for sheep and beef cattle pasture. It was noted that the Plan Commission and Town Board have already approved the rezoning of the property (31.44 acres will remain A-1 Exclusive and 3.99 acres will be rezoned from A-2 to A-1 Exclusive). The rezoning request will have to be reviewed by Dane County Zoning before that process is completed. No concerns from the OSPC were reported for this Preliminary CSM.

The members then reviewed a CSM that was not presented to the OSPC at the preliminary phase. It has already been approved by the Town Board based upon a recommendation from the Town of Verona Plan Commission. The CSM was accompanied by a printed map of steep slopes in excess of 12 percent. There followed a discussion regarding the probable annexation of this parcel into the City of Verona as it had been purchased by the Verona Area School District (VASD) for a possible new school site. Furthermore, there was discussion regarding the location of this parcel relative to publicly dedicated lands, trails, and natural areas.

Chair Keen moved to recommend to the Town Plan Commission that they add an action item to their July 30, 2015 agenda to recommend to the City of Verona planners to consider easements within the site plan they review for the VASD land off of Locust Drive which is to be annexed and developed within the City of Verona as defined by the Certified Survey Map reviewed by the Town of Verona Open Space and Parks Commission at their regular meeting held on July 1, 2015. Furthermore, the Open Space and Parks Commission recommends that the Town of Verona Plan Commission recommend to the City of Verona planners that these proposed easements be a critical first step towards connecting existing natural resources in the surround area which would be beneficial to both communities. These existing natural resources include the following:

The Scheidegger Forest near the intersection of Range Trail and Sunset Drive

The Ice Age Alliance property to the east of the VASD land purchase which connects CTH M to CTH PB

The Prairie Moraine Park on the east side of CTH PB and south of CTH M

The Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area that is south of Sunset Drive and west of STH 69

Second by Stellick. Tom Mathies expressed his opposition to the motion as the Preliminary Certified Survey Map has already been accepted by the Town of Verona and City of Verona, although he is supportive of connecting the listed resources. In favor: Hoffman, Maxwell, Stellick, and Keen. Opposed: Mathies. Motion carried. Bill Keen and Doug Maxwell will attend the July 2, 2015 Town of Verona Plan Commission Meeting and hope to share their recommendation either during Public Comments (Mathies felt State Statute prevents use of this agenda item for these purposes; Clerk-Treasurer Wright disagreed with that interpretation--the Statute is to prevent violation of open meeting laws by members of the committee, commission, or board who are hosting the meeting who attempt to introduce action items or discussion that could lead to a future decision without including it a specific item on the agenda) or to be recognized by Plan Commission Chair Manfred Enburg during the discussion of the Herfel/VASD CSM agenda item.

Update on Dane County Parks Sunset Drive Parking Lot

There has been no activity for this project.

Continue Discussion of New Town Hall Site

Member Maxwell reported that he attended the meeting today of Town staff, design, and project management team members. Maxwell stated that a revised site layout was presented in addition to new costs per square footage to reflected changes to construction materials. A Special Town Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, July 21, 2015 to present updates of the design to the public; a closed session is also planned for deliberating or negotiating the purchase of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session. Maxwell further stated that the Town Board will schedule to meet with members of the Plan Commission and OSPC to discuss the purchased land and future plans. Ultimately, the Town Board will schedule a Special Town Meeting to seek approval from property owners to approve funds for building a new Town Hall/Public Works facility including the money from the sale of residual acreage from the original land purchase.

Member Maxwell noted that informational meetings on the neighborhood level were discouraged. A review of the County Highway site revealed that the septic system was not satisfactory for the capacity of the planned use. At this time, the existing well has not been evaluated. The environmental assessment report for the site indicates no contamination issues. Similarly, no asbestos was found in the duplex to prevent its use for an instructional series of instructional burns for area fire departments. Maxwell further noted that the current amount budgeted for landscaping at the new site is \$50,000.

Continue Discussion of Future Conservation Efforts within the Town of Verona

Member Maxwell stated he has yet to complete his review of the Parks Plan, but he recommends any future revisions be achieved in cooperation with the City of Verona. There was brief discussion of possible residential development in the northwest corner (northwest corner of Section 5) of the Town within the City of Madison's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. It was noted that this is not farmland so it may be a good candidate for high density development. It was recommended that the OSPC review Town lands not only for areas for conservation, but identify areas suited for development as well; without objection.

Establish an Agenda for the August 5, 2015 Meeting

The proposed agenda is as follows: Call to Order; Approval of the Agenda; Public Comments; Updates from Staff and Membership; Approval of Meeting Minutes for July 1, 2015; Update Regarding Plan Commission Consideration of OSPC Recommendation Regarding Possible Easement on Locust Drive Property Purchased by the Verona Area School District; Discussion Regarding Repurposing the Retained Acreage of Town Land Purchased for the Proposed Town Hall/Public Works Facilities Including Prairie Restoration; Identify Areas Within the Town of Verona for Preservation and/or Development; Review Preliminary Certified Survey Map(s) (this item should only be added if there are maps to review); Update on Dane County Parks Sunset Drive Parking Lot (this item should only be added if there is an update);

Continue Discussion of Future Conservation Efforts within the Town of Verona; Set September Agenda; and Adjourn.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Stellick; 2nd by Hoffman I. Motion carried at 10:00 PM.

John Wright
Clerk-Treasurer

Approved: August 5, 2015

Revised: 8/5/2015