

Town of Verona
Open Space and Parks Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 16, 2013

Present: Keen, Hoffman, Miller, and Stellick

Absent: Siehr

Also Present: John Wright, Clerk-Treasurer (C-T), Jim Welsh, and Megan Phillips

Called to order at 7:31 PM

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Miller to approve agenda; 2nd Hoffman. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Clerk-Treasurer (C-T) Wright provided the members present with current copies of grant information from the Dane County Environmental Council as well as a brochure from the Dane County Water Education Resource Center as provided by Administrator-Planner (A-P) Arnold. Chair Keen noted the application deadline is February 28, 2013. Keen further noted a past grant from this organization provided funding for a brochure holder and signage along the Sugar River. The members briefly reviewed the materials (see attached) and agreed to add a discussion item to next month's agenda to discuss any ideas they would like to submit for approval; without objection.

C-T Wright stated that A-P Arnold had requested he poll the members of the OSPC regarding their past involvement and future interest in completing a Statement Policy for Trimming and Brushing. The members reviewed a draft dated February 8, 2012 (see attached) and recalled providing advice to the Town Board as to how the language could be clarified and redundancies reduced. Chair Keen said the Commission members would be willing to review the policy again if so requested by the Board and agreed to add an item to next month's agenda, without objection.

C-T Wright noted that the newly-designed website for the Town has been launched. Wright previously sent the members notification by email and requested they review the information for accuracy and to find links for external sites listed who currently lack that feature. Wright reported that Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Tammy Dresser added the OSPC search for new members as the feature story on the new website and sent it to subscribers of the Town's e-newsletter. Erika Hotchkiss replied to the notices, but is a City resident and cannot serve on the Commission; nevertheless, she has an interest in the OSPC. Wright reported he sent her information about the Commission including the future meeting dates. Mark Ignatowski, reporter for the **Verona Press**, is planning on contacting Chair Keen to interview him about the vacancies on the OSPC and the goals of the Commission. Wright reported he sent Mr. Ignatowski the minutes from the most recent meetings as well as a copy of the 2012-2017 revision of the Parks Plan.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Miller to approve the December; 2nd Hoffman. Motion carried.

Discussion of Grant Application and Review of an Application Letter of Support

Chair Keen introduced Jim Welsh, Executive Director of the National Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) and Megan Phillips, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association (USRWA) Executive Director. Mr. Welsh stated that the NHLT was working in partnership with the Dane County to acquire 340 acres from the Bruce Company and 126 acres from the same that would be subject to a conservation easement. Welsh noted that the Bruce Company would retain approximately 900 acres in the area including their Sunset Farm facility. The funding mechanism for this purchase (in part) is a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant, which could provide up to 50% of the purchase cost, with the remainder purchased through Dane County's Conservation Fund Grant Program.

The members reviewed an aerial map defining these parcels as provided by Dane County Parks Conservation Fund Manager Laura Guyer (see attached) as well as her analysis of the minimal impact upon the local tax base (Guyer totaled the 2012 taxes on this Agricultural Use-Value property as \$567.99 for the proposed purchase area, which did not include property that would be subject to a Conservation Easement). There was brief discussion regarding possible locations for parking (likely to the north and/or south end/ends of the property) and locations to put in canoes and kayaks. Mr. Welsh noted the main recreational activity will be focused upon canoe and kayak use, although a hiking trail on the property is also a possibility that would likely follow the river. Chair Keen wondered if the proposed Conservation Easement could extend to the northeast to link this potential purchase to the existing Scheidegger Forest County Park. It was noted that Walter Scheidegger, a native of Riley, had bequeathed money to Dane County Parks to fund the creation and preservation of parks and natural spaces in and around the Verona area.

There was brief discussion regarding sensitive historic sites within the property; member Hoffman thought Mr. Welsh should contact Philip Salkin of Archaeological Consulting and Services who is familiar with the area. Member Stellick asked about the portion of the river to the southwest of the property that was not included in the purchase; it was noted that this was owned by the Himsel family. It was further noted that to the north of the property, the Bruce Company had an area currently used for composting and dumpster storage. There was brief discussion regarding four bridges which crossed the Sugar River on the property, some of which made travel by watercraft difficult during periods of high water and could create a hazard as portions decay and detach. Chair Keen presented Jim Welsh with a letter of support after reading it aloud to the rest of the group who had no objection to its content or intended use to help secure funding for the purchase of these properties. Mr. Welsh thanked the OSPC members and stated that if the purchase is successful, then an open house will be scheduled for public review and discussion of parking areas and other matters. There followed brief discussion regarding cattle fences along the river, alternate designs for fencing, and use of a Dane County Environmental Council Grant to make improvements. Discussion concluded with ideas regarding safer passage of watercraft across the top of an old dam near Paoli Road.

Discussion of Emerald Ash Borer Treatment

Member Stellick showed the members two products available at Farm & Fleet for the control of Emerald Ash Borers. Stellick stated that Bruce Allison of Allison Tree Care, Inc. had recommended the first product to be discussed. The one product is applied annually; the amount used is dependent upon the diameter of the trunk. It is sprinkled a set distance from the trunk on soil that has been pre-moistened with water. The other product treats a wider spectrum of invasive insects and provides nourishment as well. It is a liquid product that is applied atop the soil covering the roots; after application a light watering is required. Stellick noted his trees are asymptomatic and that he is applying these treatments as a preventive measure. Stellick estimated that the cost of treatment per tree is approximately five to seven dollars a year. There followed a brief discussion of the availability of a local tree census and blights to other species.

Establish an Agenda for the February Meeting

The following items were suggested for the February meeting: Call to Order; Approval of Agenda; Public Comments; Approval of Meeting Minutes from the January 16, 2013 Meeting; Update on Property Purchase for the Bruce Company; Update on Trimming and Brushing Statement Policy; Discussion of Dane County Environmental Grant Proposals; Establish March Agenda; and Adjourn.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Miller; 2nd by Hoffman. Motion carried at 8:45 PM.

John Wright
Clerk-Treasurer

Approved: 02/06/2013