

Town of Verona  
Open Space and Parks Commission Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, March 5, 2014

Present: Mathies, Keen, Hoffman and Miller

Absent: Stellick, Jellings, Siehr

Also Present: Mike Duerst (departed 8:30 PM), Curt Herfel (departed 8:40 PM), and John Wright, Clerk-Treasurer (C-T)

Called to order at 7:30 PM

### **Approval of Agenda**

Motion made by Mathies to approve the agenda as presented; 2<sup>nd</sup> Miller. Motion to approve the agenda carried as presented.

### **Public Comments**

C-T Wright referred the group to a copy of a letter dated February 27, 2014 from Mary Rothenmaier and Cheryl Housley of the Wisconsin DNR announcing grant opportunities. Wright also introduced an agenda for a forthcoming Dane County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting scheduled for March 18, 2014 to be held at the Lussier Heritage Center starting at 7:00 PM. A map of proposed changes to the Resource Protection Corridors was included in this evening's packet as part of the Public Comments.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Motion made by Miller to approve the February minutes as presented; 2<sup>nd</sup> Mathies. Motion to accept the minutes from the February 5, 2014 meeting carried.

### **Clerk-Treasurer Report on Dane County's Definition of Natural Resource Areas**

The members present reviewed the documents gathered by C-T Wright from online resources. Wright noted that the excerpt from the Dane County Parks and Open Space 2012-2017 Plan, page 26, provides a definition. Wright further noted that in the Overview section, "land or easements are only purchased from willing sellers" and that "Natural Resource Area boundaries have no bearing on any zoning or land use decisions and participation by private landowners or local units of government to carry out any outlined resource protection initiatives is on a voluntary basis." Chair Keen quoted State Statute 23.27(e) for a definition of a natural area:

"Natural area" means an area of land or water which has educational or scientific value or is important as a reservoir of the state's genetic or biologic diversity and includes any buffer area necessary to protect the area's natural values. Frequently, "natural areas" are important as a reserve for native biotic communities. Frequently, "natural areas" provide habitat for endangered, threatened or critical species or for species of special concern to scientists. In some cases, "natural areas" include areas with highly significant geological or archaeological features. Generally, "natural areas" are areas which largely escaped unnatural environmental disturbance or which exhibit little evidence of recent environmental disturbance so that recovery of natural conditions has occurred.

Members Mathies and Hoffman stated that the screen capture from the Dane County Parks and Open Space website was confusing as it describes Natural Resource Areas as having been "set aside" with a listing of uses that require a permit and those that do not. Based upon the list of Natural Resource Area Property Maps below this description, it was assumed that the description was meant for acquired properties, not the total area contained on the map from the Dane County Parks and Open Space 2012-2017 Plan labelled as within the *Natural Resource Area Boundary*. Instead, the information on the Dane County Parks' website describes those areas on the Parks Plan map

labelled as *Natural Resource Area Property*. Member Hoffman would like the distinctions between the two to be clearer to alleviate confusion.

Chair Keen stated he will attend the March 18, 2014 Dane County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting. He is interested in knowing what relationship if any, Resource Protection Corridors have with Natural Resource Area Boundaries and/or Properties. Keen noted the Resource Protection Corridors cover a larger area than the Natural Resource Area Boundaries and conjectured that more land may be eligible for funding opportunities. Member Mathies questioned whether individual municipalities have any input into the process that determines which areas are designated within these classifications. Mike Duerst stated that he and most of his neighbors want nothing to do with being included in these areas as defined by the two County agencies. He stated he has had problems in the past with people trespassing on his property and causing damage to a cattle fence.

Included in the packet was an example of a Natural Resource Area Property Maps. The map described the Sugar River Wildlife Area purchased from Pellitteri; it detailed the size, location, canoe launch point, and two areas for public access. Chair Keen noted that hunting was allowed on the site; signs have been posted by Dane County Parks to indicate hunting restrictions on this 34 acre parcel. Chair Keen welcomed those in attendance to come to the Dane County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting. Keen asked Mr. Duerst and Mr. Herfel if they chose not to attend if he could relay any message to the members of the Steering Committee. Mr. Duerst replied that Keen should tell them that landowners are opposed.

#### **C-T Report on Recorded Conservation Easements within the Town of Verona**

C-T Wright presented the members present with his research. Wright contacted Laura Guyer, Real Estate & Acquisition Director from the Dane County Land & Water Resources Department. Director Guyer in turn consulted with Brian Standing, Senior Planner from Dane County Planning & Development who recommended downloading GIS data from the National Conservation Easement Database (NCED). Wright presented the simple parcel map of the Town he prepared using the data. The map showed the location, size, and shape of Olson Oak Woods State Natural Area. Wright noted that Director Guyer had conservation easement information for the Bruce Company property on Range Trail which he had requested, but not received to date. Wright also printed some Conservation Registry information from the NCED website for the two natural areas comprising the Olson Oak Woods.

There was brief discussion regarding the approximate cost and desire to conduct further research through the Dane County Register of Deeds. Member Mathies moved to approve up to \$50 worth of research expenses/document costs for using the online Dane County Register of Deeds document database; 2<sup>nd</sup> Miller. Wright was instructed to begin his search in the areas surrounding the Scheidegger Forest first and then the balance of the Town provided it does not exceed the maximum amount approved. Motion carried.

#### **Continue Discussion of Future Conservation Efforts within the Town of Verona and Report on Responses from Resources Contacted Since February Meeting**

Chair Keen reported he had asked the Natural Heritage Land Trust Executive Director Jim Welsh for his advice on how best to approach private landowners when seeking an easement to connect existing areas open for public use. Keen stated he would set up a meeting with Welsh to discuss this. C-T Wright wondered if Welsh may consider attending the next regular meeting of the OSPC so that all members could respond to the advice and ask questions. Keen will approach Welsh with this request. Keen further reported that he spoke with Chris James regarding a possible link between public resources. James noted that a trail was originally planned to connect the Prairie Moraine County Park to the Scheidegger Forest, but the plan was abandoned for fear that dog owners would

continue to the Forest with their pets off leash, which is an on-leash facility. James did comment that perhaps this decision needs to be revisited.

Chair Keen cited excerpts from State Statute 895.52 *Recreational activities; limitation of property owners' liability*. Keen noted that non-profits in addition to municipalities are limited if not exempt in most cases involving injury or damage of property when offering passive or active recreation when there is no fee charged. Keen stated that he did not contact Gary Weinert or Karen Godshall as originally planned.

#### **Update on Open Space and Parks Commission Postings on the Town Website**

C-T Wright has not had spare time to attend to posting anything beyond agendas and minutes. He recommended removing this item from future agendas and he will report progress during Public Comments; without objection.

#### **Update Regarding Attorney or Town Board Reactions to Recommended Brushing/Trimming Notification Letter**

C-T Wright stated that the Town's Attorney is still reviewing existing and proposed amendments to Town Ordinances so the notification letter has yet to be reviewed. Wright recommended leaving this item off the agenda until attorney review is more likely eminent; without objection. Wright noted that there is a Special Meeting of the Town Board to review revised Ordinances on March 11, 2014.

#### **Establish an Agenda for the April 8, 2014 Meeting**

Call to Order; Approval of the Agenda; Public Comments; Approval of meeting minutes for March 5, 2014; Report from Dane County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting; Chair Report Regarding Meeting with Jim Welsh with Possible Attendance of Jim Welsh; C-T Report on Recorded Conservation Easements within the Town of Verona; Continue Discussion of Future Conservation Efforts within the Town of Verona and Report on Responses from Resources Contacted Since March Meeting; Establish May Agenda; and Adjourn.

#### **Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn made by Miller; 2nd by Hoffman. Motion carried at 8:57 PM.

---

John Wright  
Clerk-Treasurer

Approved: 4/08/2014

Revised 3/14/2014