

WEST TISBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
FEBRUARY 10, 2009

Present: Prudy Burt Chair, Judy Crawford, Dan Pace, Binnie Ravitch Peter Rodegast, Tara Whiting and Maria McFarland

Absent: Joanie Ames and, Hadden Blair

Also present for all or part of the meeting: Andrew Woodruff, Ben and Sue Hopkins, Mark London, and Christine Flynn

Prudy Burt called the meeting to order at 5:05 P.M. There were no public hearings this evening.

The minutes of the January 13th meeting were approved. Binnie and Dan abstained. The Commission did hold a meeting on January 27, 2009.

New Business

Agricultural Commission: Christine Flynn, Sue and Ben Hopkins, Mark London and Andrew Woodruff were all present to talk about the MVC initiative to create an island wide Agricultural Commission. Several “stakeholders” have established a group called the Ag Alliance to do community outreach and education on the formation of a regional Agricultural Commission. There are currently 91 towns across the state that have set up Agricultural Commissions. This commission would be set up through a resolution of the Dukes County Commission with a Memorandum of Understanding among the towns. Each town would have a representative appointed by the Selectmen. This would be the first regional commission; usually the Ag Comm is created through a general town bylaw.

The Ag Alliance is planning to attend conservation commissions, planning board, and board of health meetings in all the towns to get consensus on creating this new commission which would not have any regulatory authority, but act as an advisory board to local farmers.

The MVC has agreed to provide technical staff to the alliance and then to the commission if it gets established. Prudy Burt mentioned that Ginny Jones had made a proposal to the Ag Society that they fund a position to provide technical assistance to farmers. Nothing has gone forward on that. In the 1980’s there was an Agricultural Agent for Dukes County funded through the UMASS Extension Service. Sue Hopkins said that technical assistance is what farmers need. There is a strong farming community on the island but there is no one to turn to on the island but other farmers.

Christine noted that there has not been a wide endorsement of this idea among farmers so far, which is one of the reasons for reaching out to the town boards. Andrew acknowledged that he has been on the fence about this proposal as he doesn’t have time to serve. Having a commission would be a way to get more recognition in town.

Peter asked about funding a support staff position and Dan asked them about their plans for marketing. It was noted that there is a spring walk of the farms.

Christine asked the members to give the MVC any comments or suggestions by the second week in March. No action was taken.

Greenlands: Maria reported that in reviewing the 2000-2005 Open Space Plan, she read that one of goals of “retaining the rural character of the town through management of town owned land” was the recommendation that a vegetation and wildlife inventory of Greenland be done and used as the basis for an update of the management plan for Greenlands that dates back to 1982. It doesn’t appear this inventory was ever done. There is money in the Conservation Fund for the management of Greenlands that could be used for this inventory. A request to use money from this fund would require a vote of town meeting. Maria talked to Julie Shafer, biologist at the Land Bank about cost estimates. Julie said that it would probably make sense to budget for someone to be in the field for 3 days during the spring, summer and fall, time to do a breeding bird survey and to collate the data and write a report at approximately \$90 an hour. Maria will check with Bill Wilcox to see he knows whether this inventory was ever done. No action was taken.

Administrative

2009 Warrant Article: A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2009 warrant article to reauthorize the revolving fund account for filing fees under the wetlands local bylaw. All in favor.

There being no further business on the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria McFarland
Board Administrator
APPROVED