

**Environment Committee
Meeting Summary
May 29, 2007**

Present: Bob Byrnes, Greenwich; Leigh Grant, Norwalk; Margaret Wirtenberg, Weston; Floyd Lapp, SWRPA; Alex Karman, SWRPA.

Mr. Alex Karman called the Environment Committee (“the Committee”) meeting to order at 3.12pm. The meeting was held at the SWRPA office.

1. Approval of Minutes of Environmental Committee Meeting of April 24, 2007

Dr. Margaret Wirtenberg made a motion to approve the April 24, 2007 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Robert Byrnes and approved unanimously.

2. Old Business

2a. 2007 South Western Region Open Space Inventory

Mr. Alex Karman presented an overview of the public involvement strategy. He indicated that the strategy was largely crafted based on input provided by the Committee at its previous meetings. He explained that one-on-one meetings with stakeholders were considered the preferred means to actively involve stakeholders in the planning process. Mr. Byrnes commented that he was initially hesitant about the approach but felt more comfortable after reading the strategy document. Dr. Floyd Lapp commented that he preferred this approach, noting that there would likely be less controversy surrounding this study than surrounding SWRPA’s housing study. He added that some communities might not want this study to be publicized for fear that it could bid up the price for open space parcels targeted for acquisition by the municipality. Ms. Leigh Grant responded that it was likely the developers were already well aware of these properties.

Dr. Lapp suggested that the Committee think about a timeline for conducting the one-on-one meetings. He suggested that the meetings could start in Weston, per Dr. Wirtenberg’s offer, followed by the other communities represented on the Committee. He asked the committee to suggest agenda items for each meeting. Dr. Wirtenberg responded that Weston officials would be more likely to participate if there was an incentive to do so. She suggested that SWRPA could provide GIS data to Weston as an enticement to participate.

Mr. Byrnes inquired as to what the Committee should expect to come from a meeting. Dr. Lapp responded that he hoped the meetings would result in a series of recommendations for expanding open space holdings in each community. Based on these recommendations, SWRPA would work with the municipalities to match open space recommendations with a financial resource. Ms. Grant suggested that a number of different departments should be invited to the table, including public works, planning and zoning, and conservation. Dr. Lapp suggested that each board member take it upon themselves to identify stakeholders in their community, invite them to the meeting, and encourage their participation as part of the study. He suggested that the Committee should try to hold two meetings a month starting with Weston. He asked Mr. Karman to coordinate with the Committee regarding scheduling.

Mr. Byrnes commented that it might be difficult to attract full participation at these meetings if they are held in the summer when many people are away. He added that he would be unavailable during the summer, meaning a meeting with Greenwich officials would have to wait until September. He suggested that the Committee be clear about the objective of the meeting in order to generate meaningful feedback and buy-in from the stakeholders. He added that the meetings would be a great opportunity to showcase SWRPA to people who might not be aware of the agency’s activities. Ms. Grant inquired whether it

would be possible to also meet with the Merritt Parkway Conservancy. Mr. Lapp responded that it was a possibility. Ms. Grant and Dr. Wirtenberg commented that they would talk to officials in each of their municipalities to set up the meetings.

Dr. Lapp suggested that a topic of discussion at the next Committee meeting could be the reaction from the first two public involvement sessions. Mr. Karman inquired whether the Committee thought it necessary to also hold a workshop session as part of the public involvement process. Ms. Grant responded that she felt there was no need to at this time but that the Committee could reconsider this matter later if warranted. Mr. Byrnes added that the targeted meetings would likely cover everyone with an interest in the study.

3. New Business

Ms. Grant explained that Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P) was proposing to replace the oil-filled electrical cables in Long Island Sound with cross linked polyethylene insulated (XLPE) power cables. She explained that although this represented a positive improvement from an environmental perspective, she was concerned about CL&P's request to the Norwalk Planning and Zoning for a waiver of a public hearing. She indicated that upon receiving the request, the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission requested a meeting with CL&P but has yet to receive a response. She expressed the fear that this application was part of a larger effort to sell electricity to Long Island rather than solving the power problems in South Western Connecticut. She inquired whether Dr. Lapp would be willing to review material pertaining to this matter. Mr. Lapp welcomed the opportunity to review the material and added that the material could be attached to the report of the Committee, which will be presented to the full SWRPA board. Mr. Byrnes concurred, noting that CL&P should be expected to follow all protocol and should not shy away from a public hearing.

Ms. Grant explained that as part of the update to Norwalk's plan of conservation and development, a suggestion had been made to develop a list of people with expertise in sustainable technology. She added that the list would be reviewed in order to assure that only qualified persons were included. She suggested that it would be a good idea for SWRPA to participate in the development and maintenance of this list.

4. Next Meeting Date

Mr. Karman indicated that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, June 26, 2007 at the SWRPA office.

5. Adjourn

Ms. Grant made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Dr. Wirtenberg and moved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 4.17 pm.

Prepared by Alex Karman, South Western Regional Planning Agency.
Approved on June 26, 2007