

**Environment Committee
Meeting Summary
September 4, 2007**

Present: 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 3.07pm. The meeting was held at the SWRPA office.

1. Approval of Minutes of Environmental Committee Meeting of May 29, 2007

Ms. Leigh Grant made a motion to approve the June 26, 2007 minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Dr. Margaret Wirtenberg and approved unanimously.

2. Old Business

2a. 2007 South Western Region Open Space Inventory

Mr. Alex Karman explained that public involvement meetings had been held with officials from Weston and Darien and that meetings were scheduled with Stamford, Wilton, and Greenwich. He summarized the discussions that took place at the meetings and provided a sample of the maps that were presented to local officials. He described the overall response as positive. He explained that most comments received concerned specific properties included or excluded from the map but that some substantive comments regarding the direction of the study had also been received. For example, he explained that the first selectman in Weston commented that a clear distinction should be made between open space properties and golf courses, which the Town of Weston does not consider to be open space. Dr. Wirtenberg inquired whether conservation easements were also being included in the inventory. Mr. Karman explained that they were not included because the data was not readily available.

Ms. Grant inquired as to what would be the ultimate outcome of this study. Dr. Floyd Lapp explained that it was still his intention to move the project towards a plan where properties desirable for acquisition are identified. He recounted that in Weston, the first selectman was reluctant to provide a list of their targeted properties because of concerns it would bid up the price for the land. He explained that other communities had expressed a similar opinion. He suggested that one idea might be to designate some of the properties identified on the map (for examples, private recreation or water company land) for possible acquisition. He explained that these properties may have potential, in whole or in part, to expand the supply of open space in the region. He added that linking open spaces should also be considered an important goal. Ms. Grant concurred, noting that when large potential permanent open spaces are lost to development, they are lost permanently. Dr. Wirtenberg inquired as to the expected completion date of the study. Dr. Lapp replied that the study should be complete by the end of the calendar year and that the completed study will be included as part of an update to SWRPA’s Regional Plan of Conservation and Development.

3. New Business

Ms. Grant described how she had spent three hours touring the Merritt Parkway with Connecticut DOT officials to discuss the issue of tree safety. She explained that many trees were slated to be felled to improve safety in light of several deaths caused by falling trees. She explained that removing the trees would not only improve the safety of the Merritt Parkway but would open up some small vistas and improve the general appearance of the landscape. She explained that new sections of concrete Merritt barriers (similar in appearance to Jersey barriers) were being installed along the Merritt Parkway instead of the wood barriers that are installed in Stratford and Greenwich. She commented that the Merritt barriers were less aesthetically pleasing than the wood barriers and that they were harder for animals to

mount. She added that she was pleased that a landscape architect would be advising Connecticut DOT as part of these efforts.

4. Next Meeting Date

Mr. Karman indicated that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, October 16, 2007 at the SWRPA office. Dr. Lapp explained that he had another engagement in the afternoon and suggested moving the meeting to 10.00am the same day, to which the Committee agreed.

5. Adjourn

Dr. Wirtenberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Ms. Grant. The meeting adjourned at 3.58pm.

Prepared by Alex Karman, South Western Regional Planning Agency.
Approved on October 16, 2007

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