

Minutes of a Conservation Commission Meeting - 29 April 2020 via ZOOM

Members present: Peter Vincent – Chairman, Stuart Lollis, Jeff Carlson, Geoff Kontje, Lil Province  
Absent: Christina Brown, Bob Avakian  
Staff: Jane Varkonda, Lisa Morrison

[Also present Noah Asimov from the Vineyard Gazette]

**STANTON – 65 BUTLER’S COVE** Sean Murphy and Doug Hoehn were present to request approval of minor changes to the development envelope as shown on the plan dated 1 November 2019 and as described in the letter from Sean Murphy dated 23 April 2020. Portions of the propane tank, the a/c condenser and the bio-clear unit were inadvertently located outside the development envelope. The applicant is proposing to ‘swap’ out those areas and substitute undeveloped land currently outside the development envelope. The existing development envelope is 24,687 sq. ft.; the proposed would be 24,664 sq. ft. According to the conservation restriction, minimal modifications and adjustments to the development envelope are permitted so long as the size of the development envelope is not increased.

Kontje asked how long the improvements have been in place. About 15 years, Hoehn replied. Kontje made a motion to approve the changes as presented. Province seconded the motion. Carlson, Lollis, and Vincent also voted to approve. Unanimously approved.

**SWARTZ – STARBUCK NECK** Agent gave a brief update on the on-going enforcement and restoration issues on the property. Hoehn explained that there is still some unfinished survey work to be completed. A site visit with Mark Manganello had to be postponed several times, and then came Covid-19. The agent commented that she has asked Manganello to include the area around the platform as part of the restoration. Agent will be in touch with the applicant’s attorney, Lisa Goodheart, and will ask for a restoration timeline as well as confirmation that the location of the platform has not changed. Commission voted unanimously to continue the discussion to the next meeting, 20 May 2020.

**FARM INSTITUTE** Sam Hart was present via ZOOM to discuss the proposed Use Plan for 2020. Also present via ZOOM were Lindsay Brown, Engagement Manager, and Daniel Athearn of Morning Glory Farm. Hart said that after the last meeting in February, he has worked hard on the Agricultural component of the use plan. TTOR has promised \$25,000 to upgrade the manure-handling operation. Hart said the intent is to make the farm active year-round. He said he is not sure whether that will happen this winter, as some more infrastructure improvements need to be made in order to over-winter a herd.

In the meantime, Daniel Athearn is planning to bring 15 cows to the farm for early spring for about five weeks. The Farm Institute’s herd will be coming over in June. Hart said that he estimated the herd would be between 10 and 30 head initially. Hart also reported that work has begun in the gardens and improvements and repairs to the barns are being made.

Lollis had some questions about staffing levels. Hart responded that they are trying to be flexible, as no one really knows what the summer or fall will look like on the island.

Athearn said that he hopes to collaborate with the Farm Institute in the future. Vincent asked if he had signed a sublease. Hart said that it was not a formal arrangement – more of a gentlemen’s agreement. Athearn said that they hope to raise vegetables at the farm and are in the process of building up the soil.

Lollis asked about the number of sheep, pigs, and chickens. Hart said that the numbers were still under discussion. Lollis said that he would like to see a 3 to 4 year timeline that would indicate just what will happen when. Hart said that he believes Kevin Channel, their farm manager, would have that information. [Mr. Channel appeared to be unable to join the meeting for technical reasons.] Hart said that he will provide the Commission with a better ‘ballpark number.’

Kontje acknowledged that these are uncertain times, but he wondered if Hart could give the Commission an indication of when they hope to back up to the numbers that were described in the original Use Plan when the Trustees took over. He said he recalled something like 60 head of cattle, sheep, pigs, and hundreds of chickens. Kontje said he thought it would be helpful to understand what some of the barriers or bottlenecks were to returning to those numbers. Lollis agreed and said that he too would like to see a wide variety of farm animals in residence. He said it would make the farm a more interesting place.

Carlson had some questions about hay production. He said that he had Cornell test some of the fields and they found good fertility as well as a foot of topsoil in some places. He said that Martha’s Vineyard needs hay. Athearn said that they have used about 30 acres for hay production in the past. He noted that right by the ocean is a difficult place to raise hay because of all the moisture and fog. In his opinion using the fields as pasture was preferable to raising hay.

Vincent asked if any liming of the fields had taken place. Hart said that he was not sure, but will find out. Athearn noted that adding lime to the fields is the very first thing that he would do. He noted that the fields would require about 2 tons of lime per acre and that at \$125 per ton, it would add up quickly.

Carlson asked about soil testing. Lindsay Brown replied that soil testing is done every year in approximately 20 locations on the farm.

Kontje asked Hart if he had a pasture management plan. Hart said he did, and believed that he had sent it to the agent. He said he would send another copy.

There were no further questions and Province made a motion to continue the discussion to another meeting. Carlson seconded the motion and also voted to continue the discussion. Lollis, Kontje, and Vincent also voted to continue the discussion. Unanimous.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Kontje made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Lollis seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

Town administrator has asked all departments to delay all nonessential warrant articles. Commission agreed to rescind the request for \$20,000 for the Land Acquisition Fund and to reduce by 50% the

\$20,000 request to replenish the Property Maintenance Fund. Kontje made the motion. Lollis seconded. Unanimously approved.

Carlson commented that he believes Mayflower Wind will be applying to the Commission in the not too distant future. He said that he would like to be able to use some of the money that has been put aside from Vineyard Golf on an annual basis to hire a consultant for the town. The funds have not been used in 20 years and he would like to find out what would be required to release those funds from certain conditions imposed by the MVC. All agreed this would be a good plan to research.

Varkonda commented that the Agricultural Society has asked Edgartown to sign up with U.S. Fish and Wildlife for a goose management control project. Varkonda noted that geese a big problem at both Katama Farm and Katama Airfield. Lollis made a motion to agree to the proposal. Kontje seconded. Unanimously approved.

Morrison told the Commission that the Registry of Deeds will not accept electronic signatures on Orders of Conditions for Land Court property. (In addition, the town does not currently have the necessary software to expedite electronic signatures.) Lollis made a motion to approve Morrison as the required 'wet' signatory on Orders of Conditions during the 'Stay Home' order. Carlson seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

At the suggestion of the Town Administrator, Morrison asked the Commissioners if they would be willing to explore raising fees for certain services that are currently free, such as Certificates of Compliance and Requests for Determination. Most other towns in the Commonwealth charge for these services. Morrison and Varkonda will do the research and report back to the Commission.

### **MV Museum**

[Province recused herself from the discussion and left the Zoom meeting]

Vincent said that he was not sure if negotiations with the museum should proceed. He commented that the project has been in the works for two years , so it is difficult to classify the purchase of the CR as 'an emergency.'

In light of the current fiscal crisis, it also seems unlikely that the town or the Selectmen would be in favor of the Commission spending \$250,000 on a CR that gives the town limited public access. All the Commissioners agreed. Kontje made a motion to halt negotiations. Carlson seconded the motion. Unanimously approved by all those voting.

Varkonda and Vincent will confer with town counsel .

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:15 p.m.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_