

Conservation Advisory Commission
Minutes of the February 21, 2013 Meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Michael Restuccia, Cynthia Stephens-Westerman, Shep Bennett, Cole Moore, Linda Green

Excused: Dick Pastore, Victor Lamoureux, Steve Appel

Guest: Michael Haas of Haas Landscape Architects

The next regular meeting of the CAC will be on March 21, 2013.

Michael Haas of Haas Landscape Architects was introduced and welcomed. The CAC's advocacy for the creation of management plans that would address the natural features in the Town parks was described. Mr. Haas recounted his work as a long-time member of the Board of Directors of the Waterman Conservation Education Center, as well as some of his firm's contributions to projects having some component of park management.

He pointed out many situations where evidence of past human activity provided an opportunity for presenting local history and changes in land use, and the possibility of doing so in Jones Park was discussed.

There was an extended discussion of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the requirement for accessibility. While parking and pavilions must be accessible, good-faith efforts to provide access to natural sites with significant grade or other obstacles are usually sufficient. Materials for trails other than hard pavement are acceptable in many circumstances.

The variety of topics that could be addressed in a management plan could be very broad. They could range from such details as the need to mow once annually along paths through grassy fields for tick control to decisions about maintaining large areas at a particular state of ecological succession.

Some of the particular problems of Jones Park were discussed. For example, one area was used as a weapons firing range. If the ground is not going to be disturbed and there are no issues with contamination of groundwater, posting the area and restricting uses that might increase exposure could be sufficient to address the possibility of lead contamination.

The national soil survey was suggested as a valuable resource because the soil types have a significant effect on the vegetation types. Mr. Haas also referred to the Town's 2003 comprehensive plan (which was never adopted). He also suggested Chip McElwee of the Broome County Soil and Water Conservation District as a person to consult, especially regarding stormwater runoff issues. Mr. McElwee has been a guest of the CAC in the past.

After Mr. Haas departed, Cindy noted that an on-line survey of Broome County residents by County Planning Department showed strong support for environmental preservation in the county comprehensive plan, which is due at the end of the summer.