

Public Forum on Conservation Subdivision Held by the Harpswell CPIC

The first public forum on conservation subdivisions was held on September 23, 2013 from 6:30 – 8 pm at the Harpswell Town Office. It was well-attended, with more than 2 dozen attendees including current and former selectmen and planning board members.

Randall Arendt, landscape planner, site designer, author, and national expert on conservation subdivisions, presented about the use of conservation design as a tool for protecting open space in new developments. Randall described the four step design process: 1. Identifying conservation areas, 2. Locating house sites, 3. Aligning streets and trails, and 4. Drawing in the lot lines. His presentation included examples of conservation subdivision development throughout Maine and New England including a number in Brunswick and Freeport.

The audience had many good questions following Randall's presentation. They included:

- Who owns the common land and who maintains it?
- What is the impact on property tax revenues?
- What are the implications for fire protection and safety?
- How does affordable housing fit in?
- What is the difference between cluster and conservation subdivisions?
- Is the process slower, and would it discourage developers?
- What is the standard lot size?

At the end of the meeting, several attendees spoke in favor of the concept generally. You can view the video of the workshop at

<https://vimeo.com/album/1503508/video/75579275>

Based on this feedback, the committee has a number of important issues to consider as we start to look at how conservation subdivision could work in Harpswell.

The CPIC will present another forum on Conservation Subdivisions on November 12th at 6:30pm at the Town Office.