

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of April 23, 2019 at 7:00 pm
Meeting Room 3, Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

These minutes are subject to approval by the Conservation Commission

Present: Holly Kocet, Gail Friedman, Mike Santora, Mark Lurie, John Madzula, Mark Boland

Staff: Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Land Use, Christine O'Neill, Clerk

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for April 9, 2019

Mr. Boland moved to approve the minutes from April 9, 2019. Mr. Lurie seconded. All were in favor and the minutes from April 9, 2019 were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Bikes and Trails Committee sent a memorandum on April 10, 2019 to the Conservation Commission. It states that on Saturday, June 1, 2019 the Bike and Trail Committee will hold an AI's Trail work day. On May 30th, there will be a training session for interested volunteers. Mr. Lurie commented that the event will be publicized in the Bee, Voices, and the local Patches.

AGENCY REPORTS

Fairfield Hills Authority & Board of Finance - Mr. Boland reported that the most recent Board of Finance meeting was canceled. Fairfield Hills Authority had also been canceled. A kiosk (Boy Scout project) that is also a solar charging station is set to be completed this summer by the ball fields on the Fairfield Hills Campus.

Parks and Rec - Mr. Santora said that the Fruit Trail Awakening is scheduled for May 4th and 5th, which the Commission speculated would consist of cleaning and pruning.

Inland Wetlands - Ms. Friedman reported that the most recent meeting had been canceled, but the Commission would be meeting tomorrow. The Housatonic Valley Association would give a presentation on their rootwad project.

Planning and Zoning - Mr. Madzula explained that two applications had been approved at the most recent meeting: a special exception for the winery at 56 Pole Bridge Road, and amendments to a previously-granted special exception for Pleasant Paws pet center at 94 South Main Street. Ms. Kocet asked if any trees would be removed from the Pole Bridge property, and Mr. Sibley replied that no trees would be removed. Due to the high volume of invasives on the property, Mr. Sibley said anything that was likely to be cleared would be an improvement. Mr. Madzula also explained that at the Planning and Zoning meeting, Land Use Director George Benson shared a referral from the Town of Monroe for a zone change that would allow the disposal of hazardous wastes near Halfway River. Mr. Sibley clarified that Mr. Benson had misinterpreted the referral, and that the allowance already exists in that zone.

Board of Selectmen - Ms. Kocet said that she did not see anything in the minutes that would affect the Conservation Commission.

Bike and Trails - Mr. Lurie shared that the Bikes and Trails Committee would have their own tent at Ms. Kocet's suggestion for Earth Day. He also reiterated the upcoming work day for AI's Trail is June 1st, National Trails Day.

Mr. Sibley will be sending information to the Bikes and Trails Committee by the end of the week to help them clear the invasives and improve the parking and crossing for the stream on Tom Brook. Mr. Sibley offered to put some Open Space markers out to clarify where the Town's property ends.

DISCUSSION

High Meadow

The entirety of High Meadow was mowed even though Ms. Kocet requested that only half be mowed at this time. Ms. Kocet echoed her thoughts from last meeting that black plastic would be a good way to kill the harmful grasses without negatively impacting the nutrients and microorganisms in the soil. Mr. Sibley suggested the 6 mil black plastic, which he has used to kill Japanese knotweed. He further offered to pass along research that had been done on this method to Ms. Kocet.

Pole Bridge

Ms. Kocet stated that there was nothing to report, but was looking to visit some of the Open Spaces. She would like to visit the "rabbitat" at Stone Bridge. Mr. Sibley said some trees there needed to be cleared.

Director's Report

Mr. Sibley shared that Laurel Trail's closing is coming up. It was approved at the Board of Selectmen's end of March meeting and now what is needed is the First Selectman's signature.

A "fee in lieu of" was received for the Platt's Hill subdivision. "A fee in lieu of," according to state statute, is provided by the developer when they choose not to give a parcel of land to Open Space during the creation of a subdivision. This fee is 10% of the property's value, divided by the number of lots, and placed as a lien against the property. Each time a parcel is sold, the Town gets a check which is deposited into the Open Space account.

Ms. Kocet wondered if the Conservation Commission could get permission to do plantings on the island in Dodingtown; Mr. Sibley replied that the island is State property. He said Pat Llodra had taken on beautifying certain islands in Newtown in the past. Ms. Kocet confirmed with Mr. Sibley that she would need to speak with the State to get permission for the plantings.

Native Plant Policy

Ms. Kocet said she and Ms. Friedman are still working on the Native Plant Policy.

Invasive Task Plant Force

Ms. Kocet has not been in touch with Dan Holmes since the last meeting.

Conservation Table, Website & Kiosks

Ms. Kocet stated there was nothing to report.

Newtown Earth Day, April 27th

UConn's extension office gave Ms. Friedman a huge display poster (with its own easel) about invasives to use for the Earth Day event. Ms. Friedman said Mr. Lurie had provided Seed Ballz which can be handed out. The Girl Scouts will have their own table demonstrating how to make seed balls.

Mr. Sibley asked what was needed at the event. Ms. Kocet stated that one table will be provided. Mr. Sibley will bring a tent, one 8-foot table, a tarp, sandwich boards from the basement with displays of invasive barberry, the banners, and four or five folding chairs.

The event begins at 10 a.m. Mr. Sibley said he would drop off the supplies at 8, and Mr. Boland said he would meet him there. Mr. Sibley will return at 3 or 4 p.m. for pickup.

Mr. Boland wondered if the Bike and Trails Committee could be positioned next to the Conversation Commission at the event.

Newtown Pollinator Pathway

The next project will be working with Newtown Forest Association and a Boy Scout to plant the foundation at Cherry Grove. Ms. Kocet will be speaking with Bob Eckenrode tomorrow morning.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Lurie moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Boland seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Christine O'Neill, Clerk*