

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of November 10, 2020 at 7:00 pm

Zoom Information:
<https://zoom.us/j/96529511740>
Call-in Number: 1 929 205 6099
Meeting ID: 965 2951 1740 #

These minutes are subject to approval by the Conservation Commission

Present: Holly Kocet, John Dixon, Mark Boland, Mark Lurie, and Justin Kaiser

Staff: Christine O'Neill, substitute clerk

Public: John Fung, Conservation Commission candidate

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: INTERVIEW OF CC CANDIDATE

Ms. Kocet invited John Fung to share his background. Mr. Fung has lived in Sandy Hook since November 2014. He works in cyber security and has been very active in the community, including sports, the library, and cub scouts. The Commission wondered how his work experience relates to conservation. Mr. Fung said it's not a one-to-one skill transfer, but there are similarities in high-level resource management and protecting the public. He admires the recent work of the Conservation Commission such as the planting of pollinator gardens.

Ms. Kocet explained the activities and responsibilities of the Conservation Commission:

- Review and monitor Open Space and potential Open Space parcels
- Receive reports from Land Use Agency staff
- Work on special conservation-related projects
- They are always open to fresh, new ideas

Mr. Fung said he spends a lot of time in the outdoors and taking care of his property, so he is excited to go on site walks.

CORRESPONDENCE

No updates.

AGENCY REPORTS

Fairfield Hills Authority

The majority of voters endorsed a referendum on the ballot for the Town to consider mixed use residential units on Fairfield Hills Campus, Mr. Boland explained. This would involve a fair amount of underground and utility work for water and sewage, so the Conservation Commission will need to keep an eye on the High Meadow Open Space. Ms. Kocet asked if it would only be one or two buildings. Mr. Boland replied yes, no more than two buildings.

Board of Finance

Mr. Boland shared that at the Board of Finance meeting, it was stated that the Selectmen are negotiating with the Newtown Forest Association to acquire a property at Boggs Hill Road. The Commission has looked at this property before.

Parks and Recreation Commission

Mr. Dixon said there were no updates, besides more consideration of bringing disc golf to Fairfield Hills campus.

Inland Wetlands Commission

Mr. Kaiser reported that the Commission voted to hold a public hearing on a subdivision on Berkshire Road on November 12, 2020. After the public hearing, he will have more to report. Mr. Lurie looked it up on the Town GIS system and saw the land was over 70 acres including a swamp and stream. The Commission will be looking for the Open Space component that will be introduced with the Planning and Zoning Commission application.

Planning and Zoning Commission

Mr. Dixon had no relevant updates.

Board of Selectmen

Ms. Kocet echoed Mr. Boland's report that the Selectmen are considering purchasing the 20-acre Boggs Hill property from the Newtown Forest Association. It was also discussed that the Castle Hill Farm conservation easement grant was approved. The money will come out of the Land Use fund, pending bond council approval. Ms. Kocet wondered if the Land Use fund is the Conservation Commission's fund. Mr. Boland explained that the money isn't "there yet," but the legal process for raising the money has been accomplished by the bonds. Ms. Kocet still wasn't sure why they said "other Open Space projects could be considered with the excess funds." Mr. Boland replied it depends on the amount of the approval from the bond council. The leftover money, after the Castle Hill Farm money is disbursed, could be used for, say, the Boggs Hill property.

Bikes and Trails Committee

Mr. Lurie said there was nothing to report.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Fruit Trail

Holly has noticed that people are dropping garbage along the Fruit Trail, including bags of dog waste. She will speak with Amy Mangold, Director of Parks & Recreation, to see if more garbage cans could be installed. Mr. Lurie thought the Town should ban dogs at Fairfield Hills until dog-owners can responsibly clean up after their pets. The Commission was not on board.

Conservation Table

Ms. Kocet said that the table is currently hosting "leave the leaves" flyers about why homeowners should not remove leaf-litter, as it is home to overwintering pollinators.

Ideas for Summer 2021

Ms. Kocet would like to wait until the spring to plan the Harry Potter themed mugwort pulling party.

Newtown Student for Conservation

Ms. Kocet shared that a young girl from Newtown has been submitting Letters to the Editor about picking up litter, undamming streams, and protecting our planet. To recognize her, Ms. Kocet was considering something like making her an "honorary Conservation Commissioner" or presenting her with an award. The Commission really liked this idea, as it would help cultivate future Commissioners. Ms. Kocet will begin by contacting the First Selectman's Office to see if this is plausible.

Appointment of Commissioner

Ms. Kocet made a motion to appoint Mr. Fung to the Conservation Commission.

Holly Kocet: AYE
John Dixon: AYE
Mark Boland: AYE
Mark Lurie: AYE
Justin Kaiser: AYE

The Commission was excited to have Mr. Fung on board, and expressed that they would make use of his technology acumen.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Boland moved to approve the minutes of October 13, 2020. Mr. Lurie seconded. All in favor, except Mr. Kaiser who abstained. The minutes from October 13, 2020 were approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Lurie moved to adjourn. Ms. Kocet seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Christine O'Neill, substitute clerk*

A recording of this meeting is available at the following URL:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Y3UDC_s-lcN3i628DIqOIWlwA3w9N-p2