

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

October 26, 2021 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, John Dixon, Mark Boland, Michael Ablondi (teleconferenced), Justin Kaiser (teleconferenced)

Staff: Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Land Use, Dawn Fried, Clerk

Public: Mr. and Mrs. Dievert, 12 Turkey Roost Road

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Boland moved to approve the minutes of September 28, 2021. Mr. Dixon seconded. All in favor. The minutes from September 28, 2021 were approved.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Meadow Project

The Parks and Rec Dept. reached out to Mr. Sibley regarding the CC's interest in purchasing wildflower seeds. Mr. Sibley stated the seeds could be used for the meadows located in the Town's open space. Besides High Meadow, the town also owns the meadows on Pole Bridge Rd., Shelby Rd., Quarry Ridge and Meadow Brook Road. Ms. Kocet stated she was definitely interested. Mr. Sibley suggested taking a vote at the next CC meeting when more Commissioners are present. Mr. Sibley stated the CC should vote on which meadows to seed and the quantity of seed bags needed. The planting of the seeds will take place before winter.

Turkey Roost Open Space

Mr. Ron Dievert, 12 Turkey Roost Road, gave a brief overview of an open space project that abuts his property. Mr. Dievert would like to plant six Eastern Hemlocks staggered on the Town's open space. Mr. Sibley pointed out the placement of the trees on the site plan. The Commission agreed the trees would serve as a buffer, an improvement to the open space and serve as a great habitat for wildlife. Mr. Dievert explained it will be a 2-phase project with three trees planted each year. Mr. Boland moved to accept the planting proposal to plant six Eastern Hemlocks in two phases. Mr. Dixon seconded. All in favor.

Mr. Sibley stated Mr. Edwards will be re-staking the open space area soon. The original stakes along the property lines were removed. Mr. Sibley has asked the property owners to leave the stakes in the ground.

New Open Space Donation

Mr. Sibley discussed a possible donation on a 1/3 acre at 1 Turkey Hill Terrace. Mr. Sibley encourage the Commissioners to visit the site and fill out a rating sheet for discussion at the next CC meeting.

Accepted Open Space Properties

Mr. Sibley discussed three open space parcels that were recently recorded by the Town Clerk. The parcels are located on Laurel Trail. Mr. Sibley gave a brief presentation of the location of the parcels on the GIS map. He pointed out the surrounding open space parcels and the

connectivity to create larger parcels. The Commission agreed that large open space areas are an integral part of the town and they would like to continue to obtain and connect smaller parcels.

Damage to Kiosks

Mr. Sibley explained that kiosks around town have been targeted for graffiti. Some kiosk locations are Stonebridge, Rt. 34, Treadwell Park and Dickenson Park. Mr. Sibley will purchase and replace the plexi-glass and damaged materials.

High Meadow

Mr. Sibley discussed that the invasive species, autumn olive, were cut down on High Meadow. After the autumn olive was cut down, it was then stacked to create wildlife habitats. This was mostly done in the High Meadow test site. Mr. Connolly has completed the test study of High Meadow. The Commission is waiting on the report.

BSA Projects

Mr. Sibley discussed potential projects that the Boy Scouts, Eagle Scouts and high school seniors will be presenting to the Commission in the near future. Mr. Sibley gave a brief overview of the Capstone project, which high school seniors are required to complete before graduation. Some projected ideas are: a boardwalk and a bridge connecting the Deep Brook areas, kiosk learning sites along the streams, and the development of posted QR codes linked to the conservation website.

Regulation Regarding Native Plants for Commercial and Industrial Landscapes

Mr. Sibley distributed the draft changes to the text amendment for Zoning Regulations, Article VIII, Section 4. Mr. Sibley stated that he and Mr. Benson had worked on the revisions.

Mr. Sibley pointed out the importance of the three definitions at the beginning which are "Native plant", "Invasive plants" and "Native cultivars". The Commission reviewed the changes. Mr. Sibley questioned the need for the "Plant Type/Requirement" chart. Mr. Sibley stated the chart seemed redundant. Ms. Kocet felt it was important to state the plant type and the percentages required. Ms. Kocet stated that the trees are the most important plants of all. It was agreed that the Commission will review the draft one more time before a vote at the next CC meeting.

Pedestrian Access to Lower Paugussett State Forest

Mr. Sibley discussed the access to the Lower Paugussett trail which starts on Russett Road. He explained that DEEP Foresters and a private land owner have been in discussions regarding the trail. The discussions have been focused around an easement that runs through private property. Mr. Sibley presented a map of the area and pointed out the trail, the private property and the easement. Mr. Sibley suggested reviewing this topic again at the next CC meeting when more Commission members are present.

Mr. Sibley noted that there is limited bike access on the Lower Paugussett.

Annual Conservation Award

Ella Schmitt, a high school junior, was presented with this year's Conservation award for her contribution to the Conservation table at the Newtown Municipal Center. Ms. Kocet showed the Commission a copy of the certificate. The Bee ran a featured article.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boland moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Dixon seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Fried