

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

### Regular Meeting

November 8, 2022 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, Will Drew, John Dixon, Mark Boland, John Fung

Staff: Dawn Fried, Clerk

Public: Lisa Shirk, 21 Georges Hill Road, Geordie Elkins, 20 Taunton Lane

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Boland moved to approve the minutes of October 25, 2022. Mr. Fung seconded. All in favor. The minutes from October 25, 2022 were approved.

### DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Discussion of Eversource Tree Cutting – Mr. Elkins voiced his concerns regarding the clear cutting of trees by Eversource. Mr. Elkins presented pictures of clear cutting areas on Plum Trees Road and Castle Hill Road. Mr. Elkins pointed out that Eversource's level of cutting has gone from trimming limbs to cutting healthy trees located over 60 feet from any electrical wires or poles. Mr. Elkins stated he has never seen anything like this and the pendulum is swinging in the opposite direction compared to a couple of years ago. The Commission agreed this is problematic. One of the concerns of clear cutting is the opening it creates at the forest's edge. This allows light into the forest which enables invasives to grow and spread.

It was pointed out that the property owner has the right to deny Eversource from cutting trees on their property. Ms. Kocet would like the public to be aware of their rights. Ms. Kocet stated writing a letter to the editor in The Bee, as well as speaking with Selectman Rosenthal might be helpful. The Commission agreed educating the public would be beneficial. Mr. Elkins suggested creating a "Tree Commission" rather than just have one tree warden would also be beneficial. Mr. Fung pointed out that the Commission needs to understand the "why" and "where" before the Commission writes a letter. Mr. Dixon and Mr. Drew agreed. Mr. Dixon stated we need to know Eversource's standardization of how the trees are chosen. Mr. Fung has a contact at Eversource and will reach out to them. Ms. Kocet thanked Mr. Elkins for coming.

Discussion of Invasives on Public Property – Ms. Shirk voiced her concerns regarding the invasive species being used on Town property. Ms. Shirk presented a picture of barberry which was planted as part of the landscaping around Reed School. Ms. Shirk pointed out that ticks are prevalent in barberry, which are a health hazard. Ms. Shirk is concerned that the Town is glorifying the invasives. Ms. Shirk stated we are trying to educate the public on the negative impacts of invasives and yet they are being maintained around the schools. Ms. Shirk stated "there is so much miseducation coming from education". Ms. Shirk would like to raise awareness. Ms. Kocet suggested calling Donna Culbert, Director of Health, since ticks are a health concern. Ms. Kocet thanked Ms. Shirk and stated she would reach out to Selectman Rosenthal.

#### High Meadow Study Report

Ms. Kocet spoke to Bryan Connelly. Mr. Connelly is excited to continue the study. The meadow will be mowed this fall.

#### Educating the Public on Invasives

The Commission had a brief discussion on QR Codes. Mr. Fung will send Mr. Sibley the QR Code PDF.

#### The Use of Goats for Invasive Removal

Mr. Boland stated he had a discussion with Jenny Hubbard regarding the goats being housed at the Catherine Violet Hubbard Sanctuary (CVHS). The CVHS has connections with Cornell's Veterinarian School, which would be beneficial. Mr. Boland stated Ms. Hubbard seemed enthusiastic about working together with the Town. The Commission tossed around ideas and suggestions on how to move forward. Some items discussed were funding, electric portable fencing, educating the public on invasives, housing and organizing the goats and drafting a plan for the sanctuary. Mr. Boland will reach out to UCONN for more information.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boland moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Fung seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Fried