

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

April 25, 2023 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, Michael Ablondi, Mark Lurie, Will Drew, John Dixon, Mark Boland

Staff: Rob Sibley, Director of Planning, Dawn Fried, Clerk

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ablondi moved to approve the minutes of March 28, 2023. Mr. Boland seconded.

Mr. Ablondi asked how to rate an open space property. Ms. Kocet stated the rating form is on the CC website. Mr. Lurie stated there is also an on-line form. Mr. Lurie will send the link.

All in favor. The minutes from March 28, 2023 were approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Earth Day

Mr. Sibley stated Earth Day was this past Saturday. Mr. Sibley spoke about various groups making a positive impact. He stated that Trout Unlimited, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts and other volunteer groups celebrated Earth day by removing invasive plants and picking up trash along Deep Brook and on open space parcels around town.

Open Space and Grants

Mr. Sibley stated on May 15th the Board of Selectman (BOS) will hear the Conservation's open space recommendations.

The BOS will also discuss two potential grants, both are studies. One study is for the trail system off of Fairfield Hills south towards Housatonic Rail. The other study is for Al's Trail which will potentially be awarded to the Bike and Trails Committee. There is nothing in writing at this time. When a definitive answer becomes available Mr. Sibley and Ms. Mangold will present to the BOS for acceptance.

Lastly, Mr. Sibley discussed the Jeniam Foundation grant that was awarded last week to the Land Use Agency and the Parks and Rec Department. The grant is for \$6,400 and will be used for a bench and a "welcome/coming soon" sign to be placed at the end of Housatonic Trail. Eventually this area will be connected with the Newtown trail system. The vision for this area is to welcome those entering Newtown from other towns and invite them to visit the trails.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Al's Trail Corridor Draft Action Plan

Mr. Sibley stated the draft was sent to the Commission as a courtesy. The finalized plan should be available to the public soon. No date has been scheduled yet.

Educating the public on invasive plants using QR codes.

Mr. Fung was not present to discuss.

Aquarion Water Grant

Ms. Kocet asked the Commissioners if they would like to nominate a non-profit organization to be the recipient of an environmental champion award of \$5,000. They had a brief discussion. The deadline to nominate the group is May 5, 2023.

Hometown National Parks Initiative

Ms. Kocet reminded the Commission of Saturday's kickoff of the Hometown National Parks Initiative at the Congregational Church. It's co-sponsored by the Pootatuck Watershed Association and Protect our Pollinators. It's a grassroots approach to establish gardens and wild areas which will become "parks" in our own backyards. It also encourages use of native plants.

Planting native plugs on open space.

Ms. Kocet spoke again about the native plants that Protect our Pollinators have been growing. The native plants are ready to be planted on Newtown's open space.

8A Farm Field Ridge Rd.

Mr. Sibley received a letter from concerned landowners regarding a neighboring subdivision lot. The landowners would like the Town to be mindful of its delicate ecosystem and would like the Town to consider purchasing the parcel. Mr. Sibley stated the landowners have also reached out to the Newtown Forest Association.

6 & 8 Commerce Development

Ms. Kocet voiced concerned regarding the proposed development at 6 & 8 Commerce Drive. Ms. Kocet stated it will degrade the Catherine Violet Hubbard Animal Sanctuary. The Commission had a lengthy discussion. Ms. Kocet asked the Commissioners if they would endorse an environmentally focused letter from the CC to the P&Z Commission. The Commissioners agreed with Ms. Kocet's sentiments regarding the project and stated they would endorse the letter. Ms. Kocet will submit the letter for the next P&Z meeting.

Wetlands Conference

Ms. Kocet inquired if there were any inland wetland conferences or workshops available to the CC.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Dixon moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Ablondi seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Fried