

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

April 23, 2024 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, Will Drew, Mark Boland, John Robinson, John Dixon, Mark Lurie

Staff: Steve Maguire, Deputy Director of Land Use, Dawn Fried, Clerk

Public: Joe Hovious, Leopard Drive

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Boland moved to approve the minutes of March 26, 2024. Mr. Robinson seconded. All in favor. The minutes from March 26, 2024 were approved. Mr. Lurie abstained.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Discussion of Trail Repairs/New Trails on Open Space as requested by Newtown Bridle Lands Association (NBLA) – Mr. Maguire gave an overview of Boggs Hill Greenway and Farm Meadow Trail. The Commission discussed the proposed improvements on the trail. There were concerns regarding event parking in residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Maguire explained that NBLA is not ready to remediate Boggs Hill Greenway at this time. They are looking instead to remediate Farm Meadow Trail, which would include clearing brush, improving the existing trail and improving the accessways. Mr. Maguire stated NBLA would like the Conservation Commission to endorse this project.

Mr. Dixon moved to endorse NBLA's remediation and clearing of the accessways and trails at Farm Meadow and Saddle Ridge with a condition that the neighbors are made aware of the project. Mr. Maguire stated he will contact the neighbors. Mr. Robinson seconded. All in favor. Mr. Lurie abstained.

Discussion of Invasive Management/Beautification Plan on Silver Brook Lane as requested by residents of Silver Brook Lane - Mr. Maguire noted the residents of Silver Brook Lane have not submitted detailed plans. The Commission concurred that no financial assistance would be given. They would like a detailed description of the proposed work.

Earth Day Event – April 27 – The Commission discussed the Earth Day event on April 27th. Mr. Boland and Mr. Robinson will set up at 9:00 and stay until 12 noon. Mr. Drew and Mr. Ablondi will arrive at 12 noon and break down at 3:00. Ms. Kocet will work throughout the day. The theme will be invasive plants, focusing on Japanese Knotweed.

P&Z Referral for Application 24.03 for a 10-lot Open Space Subdivision on 296 Berkshire Road - Mr. Hovious stated he is advocating for the acceptance of the open space subdivision on Berkshire Road. Mr. Hovious works with Trout Unlimited. He stated the Halfway River is a "special" stream and a "lovely parcel of land" along the Halfway River that should be protected.

Mr. Hovious stated the proposed open space will be a nice addition to the existing open space and will also offer great opportunities for trails. Mr. Hovious was also happy the development will be 400-ft. from the river.

The Commission discussed the open space subdivision and reviewed the site plans. They noted the access to basin #2 would be challenging and would need permission from CL&P and the gas company. They discussed possibly relocating the basin out of the open space. There was also a discussion on the accessway to the existing open space parking area.

Mr. Dixon moved that the Conservation Commission recommends the Planning and Zoning Commission to approve P&Z Application 24.03, for a 10-lot open space conservation subdivision at 296 Berkshire Road. Mr. Drew seconded. All in favor. Mr. Lurie abstained.

Mr. Ablondi moved that the Conservation Commission endorses the proposed accessway to the existing open space parking area via the proposed road. Mr. Dixon seconded. All in favor. Mr. Lurie abstained.

Ms. Kocet moved that the Conservation Commission recommends that alternative locations for basin #2 be considered outside of the proposed open space. Mr. Boland seconded. All in favor. Mr. Lurie abstained.

Invasive Plants Concerns - Ms. Kocet stated she is part of the Japanese Knotweed group in town. She discussed the removal of Japanese Knotweed and the need for a licensed pesticide applicator. Ms. Kocet asked the Commission whether they would be amenable to offer funding from the CC funds to go towards town training. The Commission agreed that training for the eradication of Japanese Knotweed would be beneficial to the town. Ms. Kocet would like to “get this going”.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boland moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Drew seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Fried