

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of November 13, 2017 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, Cindy Joyce, Chris Smith, Mark Boland (departed at 7:28 pm), Tom Philbrick

Also Present: Newtown resident, Joe Hovious, Leopard Drive, and Newtown resident Dee Davis, Newtown Bridle Land Association.

Absent: Karlyn Sturmer

Staff: Robert Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning & Land Use, Dawn Fried, Clerk

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:05 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for October 24, 2017

Under "Administrative Items" change "Ms. Joyce wanted to write a letter" to "Ms. Sturmer wanted to write a letter" and change "Ms. Sturmer, Ms. Joyce and Mr. Smith will work together" to "Ms. Sturmer, Ms. Joyce and Mr. Philbrick will work together". Under "Stone Bridge" add "Mr. Smith will reach out to Mr. Canfield at Newtown High school and Iroquois regarding required funds for programs." Mr. Philbrick moved to approve the amended minutes from October 24, 2017. Mr. Boland seconded. All in favor. The minutes from October 24, 2017 were approved.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Board of Selectmen – Ms. Kocet stated that the Board of Selectmen approved the Conservation Commission's Invasive Plant Ban.

COMMISSION PRIORITIES

Al's Trail

The Commission had a lengthy discussion regarding Al's Trail. Ms. Kocet stated that Al's Trail is huge and the Commission has been trying to figure out the best way to manage the trail. The Commission feels it is too large of an area for one committee to take care of.

The Commission invited Mr. Hovious, former Conservation Commissioner, to the meeting for his expertise and thoughts on the subject. Mr. Hovious spoke about the history of Al's Trail and the responsibilities of the Conservation Commission. Mr. Hovious stated that the Conservation Commission was first known as the Open Space Task Force. Mr. Hovious also stated that the Town of Newtown delegated the Conservation Commission historically as having a responsible role. Mr. Sibley also confirmed that Al's Trail was the Conservation Commission's purview and it originated with the Open Space Task Force.

The Commission and Mr. Hovious discussed varied topics related to:

- Maintenance suggestions
- Walking parties with volunteers

- Add to CC webstie
- Budget for trail
- Trail groups over the years
- Pulling invasives
- Assistance from Parks and Rec
- Trail cleaning and restoration
- Reach out to Peter Cloudas
- Possible CT Blue Trail option?

Mr. Hovious stated that years ago the Commission discussed Al's Trail turning in to a CT Blue Trail. The CT Forest and Trails Group had an interest but it was never followed up.

Mr. Sibley reviewed the past agreements with the property owners. Most of the agreements have either expired or were a hand shake.

- NFA is the only signed formal agreement that is still valid. It allows Al's Trail over its property.
- Northeast Generation (now First Light) gave one-year permission but has expired.
- CL&P (now Eversource) has not given permission.
- Nature Conservancy gave written permission but has expired.
- McLaughlin gave permission for a portion but they do not own the property anymore.
- The highway permission is an easement through existing DOT property.
- The Iroquois pipeline portion that goes over the United Methodist Church property has a hand shake.

The Commission discussed the significance of finding a "champion" to spearhead the management of Al's Trail.

Mr. Hovious will reach out to Pat Barkman with an update. Ms. Barkman was a former Commissioner and worked closely on Al's Trail.

Dee Davis, Newtown Bridle Land Association, offered her assistance to the Commission in regards to helping maintain the trails.

Web Page

Ms. Joyce stated that the web site is ready to go on-line but before doing so wanted the Commission to review the additional text. She would like the Commission to send her the corrections by next Thursday. Also, Ms. Joyce would like to add the GIS link to the website which will connect to the Town's mapping system. Ms. Joyce will contact Kevin from Newtown's IT Dept. for assistance.

Stone Bridge Educational Component

Mr. Smith spoke about his conversation with Mr. Canfield, Dept. Head of Science at Newtown High School. Mr. Canfield told Mr. Smith that the school does not have funds available for an educational program regarding the Stonebridge project. Mr. Smith will ask Mr. Canfield for a breakdown of his projected expenses. After Mr. Smith has a budget amount he will then act as a liaison between Newtown High School and Iroquois in hopes that Iroquois has grant money available to enable the students to benefit from the Stone Bridge product.

Lisa Wahle, Contract Biologist to the Wildlife Management Institute at CT DEEP, has also expressed an interest in educating the students on the New England Cottontail and would like to give a presentation at the high school regarding the Stone Bridge project.

Town Owned Open Space

Beechwood - Mr. Sibley spoke about the Beechwood open space property. Mr. Sibley was made aware of man-made dirt bike jumps from a neighbor. Mr. Sibley reached out to Mark Lurie, mountain bike enthusiast from Newtown, for his recommendation on the situation. Mr. Sibley shared Mr. Lurie's thoughts with the Commission. Mr. Lurie recommended expanding the dirt jumps and creating a pump track for the bikers. The Commission discussed working with the trespassers rather than leveling the area. They would like the neighbors to feel welcomed using the open space property.

Meadow Brook – Mr. Sibley discussed his correspondence with the property owner of 6 Meadow Brook, Susan Genoa. Mr. Sibley informed Ms. Genoa that the Conservation Commission will not be taking any trees down on the open space property abutting her property.

Pole Bridge – Mr. Sibley showed the Commission updated pictures of the Pole Bridge property. He explained that the meadow had been cleaned up by the Parks and Rec dept. Parks and Rec cleared brush, mowed and took away large stones. The Commission was very impressed with the improvements to the property.

Kiosks

Mr. Sibley reviewed the five open space kiosks with descriptions and locations.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Joyce moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Smith seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Fried, Clerk