

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of February 13, 2018 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, Tom Philbrick, Karlyn Sturmer, Mark Boland

Staff: Dawn Fried, Clerk

Also Present: Gail Friedman, 43 Button Shop Road, Sian Nimkoff, 7 Hundred Acres Road

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for January 23, 2018

Mr. Philbrick moved to approve the minutes from January 23, 2018. Ms. Sturmer seconded. All in favor. The minutes from January 23, 2018 were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Kocet reviewed a letter regarding the Hunter Ridge project. Ms. Kocet sent a response stating that the letter has been acknowledged.

Mr. Philbrick reviewed the letter regarding the State Project No. 96-192 on Edmond Road and Route 6 and had no comments. Ms. Kocet will send out letter stating no opposition.

AGENCY REPORTS

Board of Finance - Mr. Boland stated that the new budget books came out last night and he hasn't had a chance to look at them. Mr. Boland will report back to the CC with the budget information for the CC for 2018 and the monies spent to date.

Fairfield Hills Authority – Mr. Boland stated that a boy scout will be building a kiosk at the baseball field which is at the beginning of the trail at High Meadow. The Commission will reach out to FFH to ask what reading material is planned for the kiosk. They thought it would be nice to add information about High Meadow.

Parks and Rec – Ms. Sturmer stated that Parks and Rec is adding handicapped accessible ramps to the property at Eichler's Cove. Ms. Sturmer questioned what decisions were made as to the location of Leaps of Faith and if Eichler's Cove was an option.

Planning and Zoning – Ms. Joyce stated that the Hunters Ridge application will be presented at the P&Z meeting on Thursday. The Commission questioned whether there would be designated open space. They will ask Mr. Sibley about the process.

COMMISSION PRIORITIES

High Meadow Vegetative Study – Mr. Philbrick received plant specimens from High Meadow from Bryan Connolly. Mr. Philbrick placed them in the freezer for 48 hours to kill the insects. He stated he will update his findings at the next CC meeting.

Pole Bridge and Pond Brook Preserves – The Commission walked both properties with Larry Rousseau, forester.

Notes regarding Pole Bridge:

- A potentially desirable piece of property
- Erosion on road near entrance
- Culverts are clogged
- Re-open clogged drains and create dip to divert water off road
- Road is gutted out
- Several trees need to come down
- Trail work needed
- Trails shouldn't be on the borders of property
- Would like to block access of property owner due to dumping of brush and ATV activity
- Concerns of Stilt grass near meadow
- Maintenance needed on meadow and trails before reintroducing to the public
- Questioned red flags and cut trees that are 5 to 6 feet apart. Will ask Mr. Sibley.

Notes regarding Pond Brook:

- Would need to build a bridge and parking to make it more desirable
- Not for recreation
- Too small a parcel for CC to invest a large amount of money
- Reassess if more connecting properties become available
- Overgrowth of invasives would be hard to maintain
- Meadow would need to be re-cut
- It has a healthy forest, questioned how to maintain going forward
- Selective cutting

The Commission concluded that they would like to make Pole Bridge a priority and will concentrate on making it a great meadow. They are hoping to have a discussion with First Selectman, Dan Rosenthal, in regards to available open space funds. The CC will also ask Mr. Sibley for assistance in asking other town departments to help with the property.

Mr. Philbrick moved that Pole Bridge Preserve be a management priority for 2018. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor.

Open Space Map – The CC reviewed the new Open Space map created for them by Kevin in the IT Department. The Commissioners appreciated the new map and a few of them asked if they can have copies. The Commission noticed that some of the Open Space parcels were different than the GIS map. They will ask Mr. Sibley to clarify. The Commission will review the map again at the next CC meeting.

Hunters Ridge – Ms. Kocet would like Mr. Sibley to clarify if Hunters Ridge will have Open Space associated with the project.

Website – Ms. Joyce stated that the approved funds for the website have been depleted. Ms. Joyce will ask Keith to give her an estimate of how many hours needed in order to figure out a budget. The Commission discussed adding trail maps, a native plant page with photos, Laurel Trail info, wildlife info, and invasive plant page with photos. The Commission will continue the discussion at the next CC meeting.

Cherry Grove Farm – Ms. Kocet shared a letter with the Commission.

Oakview Trail Bridge - The Commission discussed the pros and cons of the Oakview trail. They agreed it's a nice trail for the residents at the Regency housing complex but does not have good parking for residents outside of the area. Ms. Sturmer stated that it might be a good project to refer to Parks and Rec especially if the high school kids use the trail. The Commission described the property as needing minor maintenance and the channel is mucky off of Deep Brook. Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Kocet would like to open the trail by cutting down the tangled trees.

OPEN SEAT ON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Ms. Friedman introduced herself and spoke about her interest in the CC. Ms. Friedman is a Master Gardener and stated that she recently took over the Victory Garden at Fairfield Hills. Ms. Friedman thought that being part of the CC would be a nice connection with the open space on the High Meadow. Ms. Friedman also stated that she would like to get more involved with the community.

Ms. Joyce moved to appoint Gail Friedman to the Conservation Commission. Mr. Philbrick seconded. All in favor.

EARTH DAY

Mark will be available to help at the CC table on Earth Day. Ms. Joyce and Ms. Kocet might be able to assist, as well.

NEWTOWN FRACKING WASTE BAN

Ms. Joyce stated that the Newtown's Fracking Waste Ban is moving along. The Legislative Council voted for the ban to be heard by the Ordinance Committee.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

8:56 pm - Mr. Philbrick moved to commence the Executive Session. Mr. Boland seconded. All in favor.

9:15 pm – Ms. Sturmer moved to close the Executive Session. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor.

Mr. Philbrick moved to recommend that O.S. #17-03 be acquired by the Town of Newtown. Mr. Boland seconded. All in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Philbrick moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:26 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Fried, Clerk