

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Regular Meeting of June 12, 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, Karlyn Sturmer, Mark Boland, Mark Lurie

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:08 pm.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES for May 22, 2018**

Under "Public Participation" change "will continue to clear the trail" to "will clear the trail another time" and change "Rails for Trails, Al's Trail and Trails on Rails" to "Rail Trails, Al's Trail and Rails with Trails". Under Stonebridge add "Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Kocet noted that six large seed trees were downed by the macro burst but they were also pleasantly surprised to see substantial native shrub growth." Ms. Sturmer moved to approve the amended minutes from May 22, 2018. Mr. Boland seconded. The minutes from May 22, 2018 were approved. All in favor.

**AGENCY REPORTS**

**Board of Finance** – Mr. Boland stated that the Board of Finance approved the appropriation of \$100,000 for the Open Space easement at Cherry Grove for 29.171 acres. The funds will come from the Town's Open Space Fees in Lieu of account. Newtown Forest Association (NFA) will acquire the open space property.

**Fairfield Hills Authority** – The Commission discussed the Mad Dash which is hosted by Parks and Rec. After a lengthy discussion the Commission agreed that the event is "established" and is passive recreational and will not affect the meadows. Although the Commission noted the meadows would not be affected, they agreed it would still be a good idea for Ms. Kocet to have a conversation with Ms. Mangold regarding the Commission's ongoing open space concerns. Ms. Kocet is meeting with Ms. Mangold next week.

**DISCUSSION**

**High Meadow Vegetation Study –**

- Take "Vegetation Study" off of the next CC agenda.
- Ms. Sturmer picked up 29 plants from Planters Choice to be planted in the meadow.
- Last week Ms. Sturmer, Ms. Kocet and Ms. Friedman planted plugs in the meadow. They had a difficult time getting through the dense hay field.
- The Commission discussed the future of the meadow and whether the vegetative study was worth the \$3,000. The Commissioners had different opinions. Ms. Sturmer was not convinced it was worth it. Ms. Kocet stated that there could be a benefit to knowing what changed in three years. Suggestions were to have Mr. Connolly brought back for a walk-thru or hire knowledgeable people to identify the native plants. The Commission will revisit the discussion in the future.
- Game plan this year for the meadow is to plant mature golden rods in hopes they will take over the area as well as provide a seed base. The Commission is also hoping the plugs will be successful.
- Holly would like to purchase more plants. Ms. Kocet will contact Ms. Fried to place order.

**Pole Bridge** – (Attachment: Pole Bridge Status Report) Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Kocet visited Pole Bridge as a follow up to the forester's recommendations. Comments are as follows:

- They agreed that the improved parking lot makes it more inviting. The pipe gate was not installed but 2 boulders were placed at the entrance. The boulders will block vehicles but not motor bikes or ATV's. Ms. Sturmer suggested adding another boulder.
- Swales were added at the bottom of the road to divert the water and stop erosion. Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Kocet noticed the swales didn't continue up the road. They stated there needs to be at least 4 or 5 more swales added because the road is still gutted out.
- Ms. Kocet and Ms. Sturmer noted that the open space markings were more noticeable and that the surveyor had been through. They also noted that the walking trail was unclear at points. The Commission discussed marking the trees with paint. Mr. Lurie suggested orange painting 2"x4" rectangles. Ms. Sturmer asked Mr. Lurie if he would like to take-on the project of clearing the trail of tree debris. Mr. Lurie will walk the trail and do an assessment in July.
- The Commission discussed the meadow. Ms. Sturmer stated that the meadow needs to be mowed in the fall and will ask Mr. Sibley to reach out to Parks and Rec. The Commission also discussed taking down the trees in the meadow and removing the brush piles that contained invasives.
- Ms. Sturmer suggested adding "NO ATV" signs as well as updating the kiosk with maps.
- After the property has been cleaned up the Commission would like to re-introduce Pole Bridge to the public. Different ideas were discussed, one being a small ceremony.

**Permanent Conservation Table** - The Barberry Blitz was a success. Ms. Kocet responded to several inquiries regarding the removal of barberry. The Conservation table currently has a display of the detriments of plastic.

**Cherry Grove Trail** - Ms. Kocet expressed her concern with Newtown Bridle Trail Association's events and the possibility of horse trailers being parked on the field. The Commission will ask Rob about the Open Space Easement at the next meeting.

**Laurel Trail** – Mr. Lurie asked the Commission whether they should consider logging the damaged area. There are trees down everywhere. Mr. Lurie described the area and pointed the area out on the Open Space map. The Commission also discussed other downed trees on open space properties and questioned how they should be handled. The Commission will reach out to Ms. Sibley.

Ms. Sturmer moved to add "Discussion about the budget and remaining funds in Land Use Conservation account" to the agenda. Mr. Boland seconded. All in favor.

#### **Discussion about the budget and remaining funds in Land Use account**

**for Conservation** – Mr. Boland stated that remaining funds in the OS Indexing account is around \$15,000. The Commission had a lengthy discussion on how to keep track of the money and the best uses for the money. Mr. Lurie spoke about tools needed for trail work. He will comprise a list to be submitted and ordered.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Boland moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Lurie seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:37 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dawn Fried, Clerk

**Pole Bridge Status Report 6/12/18**  
**Submitted by Karlyn Sturmer and Holly Kocet**

**Parking:** Ample space for 2-4 cars has been created. Nice job.

**Gate:** We requested a pipe gate to be installed with a lock. Currently 2 large rocks have been placed at the entrance to the road. It will block vehicles but not ATV's. It's a good start, but we think a pipe gate will provide more security. Just need to leave space on the sides for walkers to get in. At the back of the property that borders several residences we need to resolve how to keep residents from entering with ATV's.

**Road:** This needs several swales to be formed at an angle every 100 feet to direct water from washing out the road. This has not been done.

**Trails:** It appears that the open space boundary has been marked a little more clearly at the top of the meadow, so we directed the trail away from the boundary and back onto open space by marking it with downed timber. There is a need to limb up some trees along the trail, post some trail markers at the top end, and generally make the trail less confusing and easier to negotiate. Is there a color that we could use consistently to mark Open Space trails so we can augment the use of the small trail markers? CC members could take on cleaning up the trail; it is not a major project but should be done. Mowing and limb removal along the trail adjacent to the meadow should be done now, as well as removal of a tree across the trail just past the kiosk on the right fork. These will need to be done by P&R or PW.

**Meadow:**

- 1) **Mowing:** Because there is considerable *Asclepias syriaca* (common milkweed) growing in the meadow now, we want to wait until the fall to mow the meadow again. That is about the only positive vegetation as it there is mostly mugwort growing there with some woody invasives, like barberry, coming up. Another mowing should be done in 2109 at the same time.
- 2) **Brush piles:** These are 4 or 5 year old piles. If they can be moved, they should be put on the edges or make one big pile. If they are not moved, at minimum the Autumn Olive growing out of at least two piles in the back should be removed.
- 3) **Trees:** The 6-9 medium deciduous trees left in the meadow should be taken down as they provide little mast and otherwise shade the meadow. The lone red cedar can be left. Some of the autumn olive and other saplings going up the hill just past the meadow should also be removed. If the trees are chipped up, they could be used as mulch on the adjacent trail which might eliminate the need for mowing it in the future.
- 4) A long-term plan may need to be developed to kill the mugwort and introduce more native plants.

**Kiosk and Signage:** Would like some specific "No ATV's" signs to be posted at all entrances and at the kiosk. Kiosk needs a map that clearly show the trail as well as the meadow and vernal pool. Perhaps some signs about No Dumping at back part of property? (It does appear that there has been no additional dumping from residents in the back since we walked it in January).

**Encouraging public use:** Once cleaned up, let's offer walks to the community and re-introduce this OS to the public by inviting reporters from Voices and the Bee to walk with us there. We need to emphasize that this is a really pretty and serene property *once* you get to the fork at the kiosk, where the interstate noises subside. If they see that it is an interesting loop to walk and has a parking area, I think we will attract more residents to use and appreciate this property.