

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of July 25, 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, Karlyn Sturmer (7:07 pm)

Absent: Jim Ryan, Tom Philbrick

Staff: Robert Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning & Land Use (7:29 pm), Dawn Fried, Clerk

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for July 10, 2017

Ms. Joyce moved to approve the minutes from July 10, 2017. Mr. Smith seconded. Mr. Boland abstained. All else in favor. The minutes from July 10, 2017 were approved.

REVIEW OF OTHER COMMISSIONS

Board of Finance

Mr. Boland distributed a packet of materials which included the Land Use Department's mission statement, budget highlights and the description of accounts. Mr. Boland reviewed the budget line items for the 2017-2018 fiscal year. He explained that the \$16,000 from the Stone Bridge account is not included on the budget sheet and is segregated from the CC's open space account. The CC's open space account titled "Printing and Indexing Open Space" has a budgeted amount of \$20,000 for the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Mr. Boland explained the CC does not have total control over the account. The Commission discussed which account the High Meadow expenses should come from. The two expenses are Brian Connelly's vegetative study for \$3,000 and the plant plugs for \$700. The Commission also stated they should start researching other open space projects that would benefit from the open space indexing funds.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Site Visit to 6 Meadow Brook Road

Ms. Kocet will reach out to Mr. Ryan to reschedule a visit to the property.

COMMISSION PRIORITIES

Web Page

Ms. Joyce gave an overview of Keith's task list. She also reviewed the different pages, topics and content. Ms. Joyce asked Mr. Sibley to be the point person regarding Keith's questions regarding formatting and maps. Ms. Joyce is moving forward with the website but welcomes any feedback from Commissioners.

Stone Bridge

Mr. Boland is waiting for an update from Jeremy Clark and will report back to the Commission once he hears from him. The Commission had a lengthy discussion on how to "showcase" the completion of the Stone Bridge project. They discussed different options regarding an announcement to the public and different educational components. Mr. Smith reiterated that he and Mr. Ryan will take the lead and coordinate the educational opportunities with Newtown High

School. The Commission agreed to schedule a ribbon cutting ceremony possibly before Labor Day. The parties considered will be the First Selectman, Iroquois, Eagle Scouts, DEEP, neighbors, and the press. Mr. Smith will create an agenda for the ceremony. Mr. Sibley will email Mr. Smith with the contact information. Mr. Sibley will also ask public works to widen and grade the driveway for easier access to the site.

High Meadow Update

The plugs have been set aside and will be planted on October. Brian Connelly met with Ms. Kocet, Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Wilson at High Meadow to discuss the vegetative study. Mr. Connelly is reaching out to Mr. Philbrick to follow up with the study going forward.

Native Plant Policy

Ms. Sturmer distributed copies of the document titled "Town of Newtown Ban on Invasive Plants" which was approved at the last CC meeting. The Commission had a discussion on how to move forward with the ban policy. There was a lengthy discussion on banned invasive species and the sale of such species at local stores and on-line. After reviewing the policy the Commission realized the wording needed to be more precise.

Ms. Sturmer moved to approve an invasive plant ban to submit to the Board of Selectman that includes the language as amended in the first sentence to read, "The Town of Newtown endorses the ban of all plants on the Connecticut Invasive Plant List **on town owned properties.**" Mr. Boland seconded. All in favor.

Ms. Kocet will reach out to Mr. Ryan regarding a cover letter for the invasive plant ban to be submitted to the Board of Selectman for review.

Town Owned Open Space

Mr. Sibley reminded the Commission that they need to fill out the open space rating form for the parcel located at 78 Mountain View Road and submit to him by the next CC meeting. He will also be sending another open space parcel for the Commission to review.

Drone Discussion

The Commission had a lengthy discussion on the usage of drones on town open space and High Meadow. Mr. Sibley stated that the usage of drones has been discussed at safety meetings due to issues regarding children and schools. Fairfield Hills Authority is also discussing a drone policy. The Commission discussed creating signage on High Meadow. The Commission will review the guidelines for the town open space. The Commission will continue to research whether any studies have been done on the impact drones have had on the interactions with wildlife. Ms. Sturmer suggested sending a letter to Pat Llodra with the CC's concerns with drone usage. The Commission would like to be included in future conversations the town has regarding drones.

AI's Trail

Mr. Sibley gave a presentation on AI's Trail. He gave the full history and creation of the trail and described each parcel on the map. Mr. Sibley explained that AI's trail is the largest trail in Newtown and is 10 miles long. In 2010 the town and CC took full responsibility of the trail. Ms. Sturmer questioned what the Conservation Commission's role is and how should the CC embrace the trail. Ms. Sturmer feels there needs to be partnerships with other groups because the trail is too large to handle alone. Mr. Sibley responded at this time several groups have interest or have been working on the trail. The groups are Trail Crew, SHOP, State of CT, Hubbard Sanctuary and various Eagle Scouts. The CC will leave AI's Trail on the agenda as a priority and will have discussions on the responsibility of the CC. Ms. Joyce will also add AI's Trail to the website.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Joyce moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Boland seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:27 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Fried, Clerk