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TOWN OF NEWTOWN

Fairfield Hills Authority
MEETING MINUTES

The Fairfield Hills Authority held a Meeting on June 26, 2023
in Council Chambers at the Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown CT 06470
These minutes are subject to the approval of the FHA at their next meeting.

Present: Ross Carley, Terry Sagedy, Michael Holmes, Jim Landy, Anthony Filiato, Justin Molito

Absent: Brook Clark, Melissa Beylouni

Public Attendance: Kathy Quinn – Sustainable Energy Commission Chair

Also Present: Andrew Mangold, Matt Ariniello – Director, Newtown Community Center, Kim Chiappetta – Economic & Community Development and Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk)

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

The Chairman began by thanking Authority members for volunteering their time to help make Fairfield Hills the best campus it can be for the residents of Newtown.

Public Participation:
At the request of the Chair, Kathy Quinn introduced herself as the Chair of the Sustainable Energy Commission, and noted that she was in attendance regarding the Campus Landscape Plan that was on the agenda. She distributed to Authority members articles about tiny forests and turning lawns into meadows. (See Attachment A.) Both articles spoke to the importance of getting away from grass. Small forests, the size of a basketball court, contain fast growing trees that are self-sustaining within just a few years, and provide a good source to soak up carbon. She also gave the example of clover being a good substitute for grass. Ms. Quinn recommended that the FHA consider these alternatives to typical grass areas on the campus. Ross thanked Ms. Quinn for bringing this information to the Authority and noted the opportunity for the Authority to work with the Sustainable Energy Commission.

Acceptance of Minutes
Chair Ross Carley asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting held on June 26, 2023. Mike Holmes entertained. Anthony Filiato seconded and all were in favor.

Chairman's Report
Senior Center Pavilion:
Ross explained to the group that the Senior Center has received grant funds to install a pavilion outside of the Senior Center. The pavilion is in the proposal stages, and the Authority would like the opportunity to review the plan to ensure it meets the expectations for the campus.

Mixed Use:
The Town has completed a review of the Federal Historic Designation application which will be submitted to the State for review and then forward to the National Parks Service for final approval. Ross noted how interesting it

was to locate all of the existing structures. He commended the contractor's years of work on other historic properties. Mike asked if the proposed project was on track. Ross replied that it is.

Pervious Parking:
Ross reminded members of the Pervious Parking project which will install a pervious parking area on the former location of Woodbury Hall at the entrance of the campus. Kim Chiappetta continues to work on the project

New Business:

Fruit Trail Signage – Andrew Mangold:
Ross invited Andrew Mangold to approach the Authority to discuss the Fruit Trail. Mr. Mangold informed the group that he grew up in Newtown and has lived here most of his life. He is in attendance to ask for permission to install educational signs along the Fruit Trail. In the winter of 2015, Mr. Mangold presented the concept of a fruit trail along the paved campus trail to the Authority, and was approved to install plantings along about ¼ mile of the trail. He explained that today's Fruit Trail demonstrates ecological and edible ways to help the land and people using a public space. The location is growing and thriving and has attracted Monarch Butterflies and Bees. Mr. Mangold presented and explained pictures of the newly installed Fruit Trail, and the Fruit Trail as it is today. (See Attachment B.) Mr. Mangold continues to perform maintenance on the Fruit Trail when he has free time and has learned what works and what doesn't work over the years. As a second part to this project, he is asking for approval to install educational signage that can teach people walking the trail about the plants. The proposal is to install three main signs about 2' x 3', two of which would be at each end entering the garden, and one would be located in the middle. Throughout the garden would be smaller signs, about the size of a piece of paper that would provide information on the different types of plants. Ross asked about the material for the signs and asked if they would be weather proof. Mr. Mangold explained that he is currently working with Sign Pro in Plainfield CT, and explained that signs will be attached to strong bars installed into concrete. Ross asked for the number of signs. Mr. Mangold referred the Authority to the map of the location and pointed out proposed locations for signs. He further explained that the grant funds will also be used for professional pruning of the area as well as replacing 1 or 2 losses.

Justin Molito motioned to approve moving forward with educational signage as presented for the Fruit Trail subject to approval of the sign proofs. Anthony Filiato seconded and all were in favor.

The Authority thanked Mr. Mangold for attending.

Community Center Playscape – Matt Ariniello:
Matt Ariniello, Newtown Community Center Director, began by telling the group that as the Newtown Community Center is about to hit it's 5 year mark, they have learned throughout those years that there is a need for child care in the community. This was not a focus when the Community Center opened its doors, but child care has become a primary source of income with after school programs, school holiday programs, summer campus and more. Currently for some of these programs, the Community Center uses the playground at the Reed Intermediate School which requires the children to cross Wasserman Way, posing some safety risks. Matt reminded the Authority that the space to the left of the Community Center building was acquired a few years back when the Race 4 Chase camp was first held on the campus. Matt presented an overhead map of the location with the area outlined. (See Attachment C.) The access road is being considered in the planning. Matt has been working with Land Use regarding the property lines and noted that the project area is about 5,000 square feet. Matt then presented conceptual pictures of the proposed playground. (See Attachment D.) The playground equipment colors will be consistent with the Community Center branding. The area is being designed to meet requirements of the State Office of Early Childhood – Child Care standards. Matt noted with the addition of housing on the campus, this playground will fall into a recreation need for the campus. The

playscape will have signage noting that it is not available during the hours of Community Center programming. The playscape is being paid for with special revenue funds. In addition, there are CIP funds for a shade structure for outdoor programming. This project first requires site work to level the area. Ross expressed his concerns with the property lines and would like confirmation of the property lines to ensure it does not negatively impact other plans for the area. Matt explained that he has met with the Director of Land Use who was on board with the project. He noted that the original plans for the Community Center included drawings for the area. They are hoping that the installation of the playground will serve as phase 1 of a 2 phase project. Phase 1 has an estimated start date of spring 2024 and should take about 1 ½ months. Phase 2 will be for a future expansion for outdoor programming.

Matt gave an update that the Senior Center project is for a patio, but they are looking into the option of a shade cover for it.

Ross asked if the drawings presented reflected the final project plan. Matt said there will be the addition of solar equipment and handicapped accessible equipment. The group discussed the fencing and Matt confirmed that it will meet Fairfield Hills standards and will be similar to the fencing along the soccer field. Fencing is being funded by the non-profit arm Friends of the Community Center. Ross asked if it would be possible for the Authority to see final drawings before the Community Center moves forward with their project. Matt will try to provide renderings of Phase 1 and Phase 2 so the Authority has an understanding of the Community Center goals. Terry expressed his concerns with approving the project without seeing final drawings first. Kim recommended a Special meeting if necessary to ensure the Community Center's project timeline is not negatively impacted. Jim recommended putting forward a motion to approve the concept and consider the special meeting. After some discussion Ross asked for a motion to approve the concept of the Phase 1 Newtown Community Center playscape with the approval of Land Use on the property lines.

Jim motioned to move forward with the phase 1 concept for the Newtown Community Center playscape project with approval of the Land Use department of the property lines. Mike seconded and all were in favor.

Campus Landscape Plan:
Ross reminded the group of a plan for small gardens and gathering spaces throughout the campus, and would like to form a subcommittee to investigate quotes for a landscape plan. He explained that he felt Brook Clark and Melissa Beylouni would be the best choices for this subcommittee. Ross asked Kim to reach out to both asking if they would be willing to take on this task.

New Member:
Ross formally introduced Justin Molito to the group. Justin told everyone that he is new to Newtown and has lived across from the Fairfield Hills campus for 2 year. He was raised in Sherman and has always had an interest in environmental issues, preservation and access to open space for the public. Justin said that when he moved into town he contacted Ross with his interest in the Authority. Ross informed the group that Justin has had experience with non-profits and that he will be valuable in establishing a Friends of Fairfield Hills who would help to raise funds for improvements to the campus. He asked that Justin provide an outline of what would be required to create this group and present it in a future meeting.

Ross asked the group if there were any questions. Matt asked for the status on the Fairfield Hills water project. Kim explained that she did not have any updates, and explained that it is a Public Works project. Matt expressed the water challenges being experienced by the Community Center which has required that they install filters, filtration systems and strainers.

Member Updates:

None.

Staff Update:
Kim Chiappetta began by noting that the Newtown Arts Festival was cancelled this past weekend due to inclement weather. It was the first time the event was cancelled. The concert did go-on Friday evening. There are 4 events remaining in October for the season:

1) Run 4 Hunger and Health 5k – Knights of Columbus
2) Newtown Rotary Club Cornhole Tournament – Newtown Rotary Club
3) Race for Catherine – 5K for Kindness – Catherine Violet Hubbard Animal Sanctuary
4) LivFree – Boos and Brews 5k (1st year) – LivFree
5) Final days of the Newtown Farmer's Market.

Kim noted that there are two people interested in opening a business on the campus, and that she hopes to have some information to provide in a near future meeting. Finally she expressed that she hopes to return to the Community Project Funding grant soon, which would be the funds to install the pervious parking.

Ross asked if there is a season end date for campus events. Kim explained that there is no formal end date, but events seem to wrap up at the end of October because the weather become too cold for outdoor events. She reminded the group that Parks and Rec used to hold their ice skating event in the early winter on the campus.

Adjournment:
With no further business, Anthony motioned to adjourn, Justin seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.
A recording of the meeting is available by contacting Kimberly.Chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov.

Tiny Forests With Big Benefits

Native plants crowded onto postage-stamp-size plots have been delivering environmental benefits around the world — and, increasingly, in the U.S.

By Cara Buckley

Published Aug. 24, 2023 Updated Aug. 26, 2023

The tiny forest lives atop an old landfill in the city of Cambridge, Mass. Though it is still a baby, it's already acting quite a bit older than its actual age, which is just shy of 2.

Its aspens are growing at twice the speed normally expected, with fragrant sumac and tulip trees racing to catch up. It has absorbed storm water without washing out, suppressed many weeds and stayed lush throughout last year's drought. The little forest managed all this because of its enriched soil and density, and despite its diminutive size: 1,400 native shrubs and saplings, thriving in an area roughly the size of a basketball court.

It is part of a sweeping movement that is transforming dusty highway shoulders, parking lots, schoolyards and junkyards worldwide. Tiny forests have been planted across Europe, in Africa, throughout Asia and in South America, Russia and the Middle East. India has hundreds, and Japan, where it all began, has thousands.

Now tiny forests are slowly but steadily appearing in the United States. In recent years, they've been planted alongside a corrections facility on the Yakama reservation in Washington, in Los Angeles's Griffith Park and in Cambridge, where the forest is one of the first of its kind in the Northeast.

"It's just phenomenal," said Andrew Putnam, superintendent of urban forestry and landscapes for the city of Cambridge, on a recent visit to the forest, which was planted in the fall of 2021 in Danehy Park, a green space built atop the former city landfill. As dragonflies and white butterflies floated about, Mr. Putnam noted that within a few years, many of the now 14-foot saplings would be as tall as telephone poles and the forest would be self-sufficient.

Healthy woodlands absorb carbon dioxide, clean the air and provide for wildlife. But these tiny forests promise even more.

They can grow as quickly as ten times the speed of conventional tree plantations, enabling them to support more birds, animals and insects, and to sequester more carbon, while requiring no weeding or watering after the first three years, their creators said.

"The forest is the root of all life; it is the womb that revives our biological instincts, that deepens our intelligence and increases our sensitivity as human beings," he wrote.

Dr. Miyawaki's prescription involves intense soil restoration and planting many native flora close together. Multiple layers are sown — from shrub to canopy — in a dense arrangement of about three to five plantings per square meter. The plants compete for resources as they race toward the sun, while underground bacteria and fungal communities thrive. Where a natural forest could take at least a century to mature, Miyawaki forests take just a few decades, proponents say.

A Miyawaki forest in New Delhi. Arvind Yadav/Hindustan Times, via Getty Images

feeding the soil. The initial density is crucial to stimulating rapid growth, said Hannah Lewis, the author of "Mini-Forest Revolution." It quickly creates a canopy that shades out weeds, and shelters the microclimate underneath from wind and direct sun, she said.

Throughout his life, Dr. Miyawaki planted forests at industrial sites globally, including at an automotive parts plant in southern Indiana. A turning point came when an engineer named Shubhendu Sharma took part in a Miyawaki planting in India. Enthralled, Mr. Sharma turned his own backyard into a mini-forest, started a planting company called Afforestt, and, in 2014, delivered a TED Talk that, along with a 2016 follow up, ended up drawing millions of views.

Critics point out that because a Miyawaki forest requires intense preparation and exact sourcing of many native plants, it can be expensive. The Danehy Park forest cost $18,000 for the plants and soil amendments, plus roughly $9,500 for the forest creators' consulting fees. Cassandra Klos for The New York Times

Around the world, conservationists took notice.

In the Netherlands, Daan Bleichrodt, an environmental educator, plants tiny forests to bring nature closer to urban dwellers, especially city children. In 2015, he spearheaded the country's first Miyawaki forest, in a community north of Amsterdam, and has overseen the planting of nearly 200 forests since.

Four years later, Elise van Middelem started SUGi, which has planted more than 160 pocket forests worldwide. The company's first forest was planted on a dumping ground alongside the Beirut River in Lebanon; others were sown later near a power plant in the country's most polluted city, and in several playgrounds badly damaged by the 2020 blast at Beirut's port.

And Earthwatch Europe, an environmental nonprofit, has planted more than 200 forests, most of them the size of a tennis court, throughout the United Kingdom and mainland Europe in the last three years.

Though many of the forests are still very young, their creators say there have already been outsize benefits.

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

A couple was sick of mowing. Now their wildflowers are a local attraction.

'We started this as not wanting to mow grass, never expecting it would become what it has,' Jonathan Yacko said about his Vermont field

By Cathy Free

September 15, 2023 at 8:00 a.m. EDT

Jonathan Yacko was tired of mowing the lawn on the 5½-acre property that he and his wife, Natalie Gilliard, moved to in Chittenden, Vt.

"It would take a solid day to mow and trim everything," Yacko said, explaining that on some summer nights, he'd be out clipping grass until after 9 p.m.

"We knew there had to be something better we could do than maintain a lawn," Gilliard added.

But the couple didn't know what that should look like. Other than caring for a small patch of grass and a few boxwood shrubs at their former home in Long Island, they'd had no experience gardening or landscaping.

The couple mentioned to one of their neighbors, Hadley Mueller, that they were planning to look into some new landscaping ideas. Mueller happened to work for American Meadows, a Vermont-based seed company.

"Wildflowers," she told them. "I thought they had the perfect spot for a beautiful meadow."

Yacko, 36, and Gilliard, 34, were immediately onboard. They started by ripping out an acre's worth of grass, then they ordered a 50-pound bag of seed that would grow 27 varieties of wildflowers that thrive in the northeast, both perennials and annuals.

They plowed, ran a rake over it, and put seeds down.

He and Gilliard are among a growing group of homeowners who are sick of lawns and made a change with their own yards. Their story was first reported by by Vermont Public.

Growing a wildflower meadow or planting other alternatives to grass is part of a movement to use fewer resources, foster community relationships and help reverse the loss of insects.

"We had no idea what we'd be looking at after we first planted the meadow, but that was part of the fun," Yacko said.

Now that they own a popular wildflower meadow, they've developed a new appreciation for low maintenance landscaping.

Except for watering the seed for the first several months to help with germination, "it's pretty much plant it and forget it," Yacko said. Instead of firing up a lawn mower every few weeks, he now mows the meadow once every spring to help the flowers to come back in abundance.

Mueller recommends that homeowners leave wildflower meadows alone in the winter as a food source for birds and other wildlife.

"A wildflower meadow has transformative power: It's good for you, it's good for the environment and it's good for the world," Mueller said. "Natalie and Jonathan are living that story, and now their meadow is buzzing with life."

Once the blooms have faded this fall, Yacko and Gilliard said the anticipation of seeing the first sprouts of green in the spring will help get them through the winter.

"We started this as not wanting to mow grass, never expecting it would become what it has," Yacko said. "Now we're helping the bees, we're adding beauty to the landscape and we're making the community happy."

"It's nice to be able to give that back to everyone," he said.

Putting Down Roots: Creating Native Lawns

By Tricia Ennis

Editor's Note: This is an engaging first-person perspective on native lawns from Connecticut Inside Investigator correspondent Tricia Ennis.

"We like to say we are in the lawn elimination business here," explains Jessica, exuberantly. Jessica is a Horticulturalist and Sales Associate at Natureworks Horticultural Services in Northford, an organic garden center and landscape design company that has been in business for 40 years. She has been there for the last five.

I've made the trek down here, and undertaken this investigation, for a slightly selfish reason. Late last year, I was fortunate to become a homeowner for the first time. Living in apartments for years, I had gotten used to the idea of decorating, organizing, and maintaining a living space, but a single-family house brings with it a new challenge: a yard.

As the seasons changed and the snow gave way to spring, I've had to turn my attention from inside my new home to out. With near-infinite choices in front of me, there is only one thing I know for certain: I don't want a lawn I have to mow or water regularly. As it turns out, I'm not alone.

Lawns take up more space than you might think.

According to a 2012 survey, turfgrass covers around 2% of the landmass of the continental US — or about the same amount as all the wheat crops grown domestically. While lawns serve a purpose — helping to restore groundwater, locking down topsoil, and sequestering a small amount of carbon — the varieties of grass used in the household lawn aren't native species. As a result, they require frequent attention and resources from weekly mowing to water and fertilizer.

The EPA estimates that around a third of all water use nationwide is spent on landscaping, amounting to 9 billion gallons of water per day. With droughts and concerns over dropping pollinator populations, some homeowners have become interested in a different route, one that satisfies a desire for environmental friendliness while still requiring minimal effort to keep everything alive.

Enter, native lawns.

Grass Vs. Gardens

The last several years have seen growth in the popularity of alternative lawns. Some homeowners are looking for a climate-friendly alternative to grass that requires fewer resources to maintain and others simply don't want to spend time, energy, and money maintaining something of low value to them.

For Natureworks, turfgrass is an enemy.

"It is all one plant or a few different varieties of grass, but it does not produce seed," explains Jessica. "It takes up a tremendous amount of water. You see people out in the heat of the summer in a drought watering their lawn and you want to shake your fist at them and say, stop!"

Jessica also points to carbon emissions and noise pollution from the frequent use of gas-powered mowers as another reason to consider a low-maintenance alternative. Plus, she says, turfgrass is boring.

"You look out into a neighborhood like this and you see mostly turf," says Jessica, gesturing toward the residential neighborhood surrounding Natureworks. "It's sad. It makes me sad because there's nothing happening and there could be so much more happening there."

Ultimately, for Jessica and Natureworks, the goal is to give everyone an opportunity to become a gardener, replacing their lawns with colorful flowering gardens full of native plants that can provide homes and food for bees, butterflies and other insects and small creatures. But that's not the only reason.

"There's definite personal benefits," she argues. "You will enjoy your yard more, cause you'll see so much more activity. And you're also inspiring people. We sell a lot of cute little signs that, you know, pollinator-friendly garden, pesticide-free garden to try to get people in your neighborhood a little bit more excited about what you're doing."

Jessica also recognizes that taking on a major gardening task can be an intimidating prospect. There is much to learn, many plants to choose from, and nothing makes your lawn look bigger than the prospect of ripping it all out and starting over.

"If you have a small little property, you could probably do it all at once, but it can be a little bit overwhelming," she sympathizes. "But there are strategies that make it more bearable."

One of those strategies is called passive bed preparation, where you choose a small section of your yard to work on at a time and set about killing all the grass, weeds, and other plants growing there. You do this through a technique called smothering.

"You can use either tarps or cardboard or newsprint, and you put that down on the turf and leave it there and just kind of forget about it," explains Jessica. "I call it the lazy gardener's method."

After a couple of months, all the grass under that material should be dead and the ground ready for planting.

"Every year I'll kind of pick a new little section, maybe like 50 square feet," says Jessica, who has slowly been replanting a one-acre property. "Smother it, wait a couple months, pull the tarp back, and then start planting with shrubs, with perennials, with whatever calls to you."

Daunting At First

Of course, she knows that switching from a lawn to a highly designed garden can be daunting for homeowners.

"That's the advantage of turf that people like. It's easier to maintain," admits Jessica. "Gardens do take a lot of work. You've gotta weed, you've gotta prune, you've gotta feed. Whereas with grass, you just fire up the mower, mow it down once a week and you're good."

Grass also maintains a "classic" lawn look, allowing you to keep your curb appeal without the effort – or risk – of a garden. And it plays an important role in helping to maintain the nutrients in your soil. Open spaces in a lawn can provide space where weeds can grow, but exposed soil also can be moved by wind or water.

"You want to preserve your topsoil," explains Victoria Wallace, the Sustainable Turf and Landscapes Extension Educator at the University of Connecticut. "You want to maintain the soil that has taken years, millions of years, to develop."

For Wallace, sustainable lawn care involves intentional decisions and making sure you've done your homework. She recommends deciding what you want from your lawn and the environment your lawn creates and then choosing grasses that meet your needs and priorities.

"I'm a proponent of enhancing the landscape and reducing inputs," Wallace explains. "And so that doesn't

super sustainable or good for the environment," says Jessica, as the conversation turns to pesticides. "Don't use herbicides. Dandelions aren't hurting anybody."

In particular, Jessica is concerned about the broad herbicides sold in most hardware or big box stores that turn a lawn from a functioning ecosystem, into a green desert.

"Roundup is a product that's really commonly used on lawns and it's what's known as a broad leaf herbicide," she explains. "So it kills anything that is not a grass." That includes things like clover.

She points out two nearby lawns. One is pristine, a smooth green well-maintained turf, while the other is dotted with yellow dandelions.

"Anytime you see just grass and nothing else growing in it," she says, sadly. "It means that they have taken a chemical and just blanketed the entire property with that chemical and killed anything that is not a grass, which gives you that uniform look, but also dumps a bunch of chemicals into the soil."

Natureworks is an organic nursery and garden center, so they advocate strongly for organic lawn care products that don't use chemicals that can contaminate soil and groundwater or runoff into sewer systems. The focus is on providing those foods and habitats for wildlife, moving toward a more organic beauty than a perfectly flat green surface.

Wallace isn't as strict about organic versus synthetic products but says there is another reason to limit the number of products you're using on your lawn.

"In the agriculture arena, they've named it as a pesticide. In human health, it's a medicine. It's the same thing. It's killing a pest," explains Wallace. "So certainly you don't want to over use a product. Just as too much or over use of an antibiotic is not a good thing, that you can build up a tolerance, you can do the same thing in the environment in terms of constant application of an herbicide."

Whatever you're going to use, Wallace cautions to use it only as needed and to change up your products so pests, fungi, or weeds don't become resistant to those products.

Choosing Plants

If you do decide to take the Natureworks route and jump into gardening, you're now faced with a whole new set of decisions. What plants do you want to use? This is where native plants will save time and trouble, even if you aren't able to use all the varieties you might want.

"The more functional plants are gonna be the ones that are native," says Jessica. "We kind of would categorize or grade a plant based on how many species it can support."

Better plants, in their eyes, are those that support as many wildlife varieties as possible including insects – especially bees and butterflies — and small mammals. New England has plenty of beautiful plants to choose from, including some that are both aesthetic and edible.

"Blueberries," says Jessica when I ask where a homeowner might start. "Blueberries is a quintessential plant that humans love. Also happens to be native. Produces flowers, which provides pollen for pollinators, berries for birds, berries for humans. So it kind of, it checks all the boxes. So we're looking at that plant as something that is, is super functional."

There are plenty of native shrub varieties to choose from if you're looking to add curb appeal and fill in larger areas in front of a home. Some even maintain the look of traditional evergreen bushes while requiring, you guessed it, less maintenance.

"It's really just about making different plant choices," says Jessica. "A quintessential plant that we use a lot is ilex glabra, which is inkberry holly. Okay. It looks, looks just like boxwood, but it's so much better than boxwood."

Inkberry is less susceptible to disease, fungus, and harmful insects than boxwood.

"Ilex glabra is native, evergreen, produces berries for the birds," Jessica continues. "It has that neat, tidy, little cute fluff ball shrub appearance. So there are plants that are kind of that, that look similar to what you might see in a traditional foundation planting, but have that kind of native twist to it."

Another benefit to native plantings: they are much more robust when it comes to standing up against New England's notoriously unpredictable seasons.

"I especially think of native shrubs as plants that compared to non-native shrubs are just able to roll with the punches of our weather a little bit better," says Jessica.

Then there is the matter of droughts. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, droughts in the last eight years have been more severe than any since the mid-1960s. Additionally, the Northeast regularly experiences what are called "flash droughts," or dry periods that last only a few months and are followed by extreme wet weather. While not as devastating as long-term droughts, flash droughts can result in crop loss and water shortages. Water conservation during a drought is essential, which means choosing plants that can stand up to low rainfall seasons.

"We're definitely shifting towards plants that are — and drought is one component — but really it's plants that are adaptable to a wide range of conditions," Jessica explains. "Like we had a really dry early portion of the season and then we got four inches of rain in like one day. And so it's really the climate change effect that we're seeing is less consistency and predictability."

Regardless of what approach you take and what plants you choose, you should be prepared for a lot of learning and a ton of trial and error. The best weapon is good information.

"It's a matter of the right plant for the right place too," advises Jessica. "There are lots of perennials, lots of shrubs that can take drought. There are also lots of perennial shrubs that can take wet soil, which is another, we see a lot of customers who have really wet swampy areas too. So, you just have to carefully assess your property."

If you're not sure how to assess your soil's quality and pH balance, Jessica recommends sending a sample out for testing. UConn provides soil testing at each of its eight county extentions and online. It provides a standard series of tests for $15. This includes a rundown of soil nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, calcium, sulfur, iron, and others, as well as pH. Additional tests, like those that tell you how much sand or clay or other materials your soil contains, can be ordered for an additional cost.

"Knowing what you're dealing with helps you to make really good, informed plant choices," says Jessica.

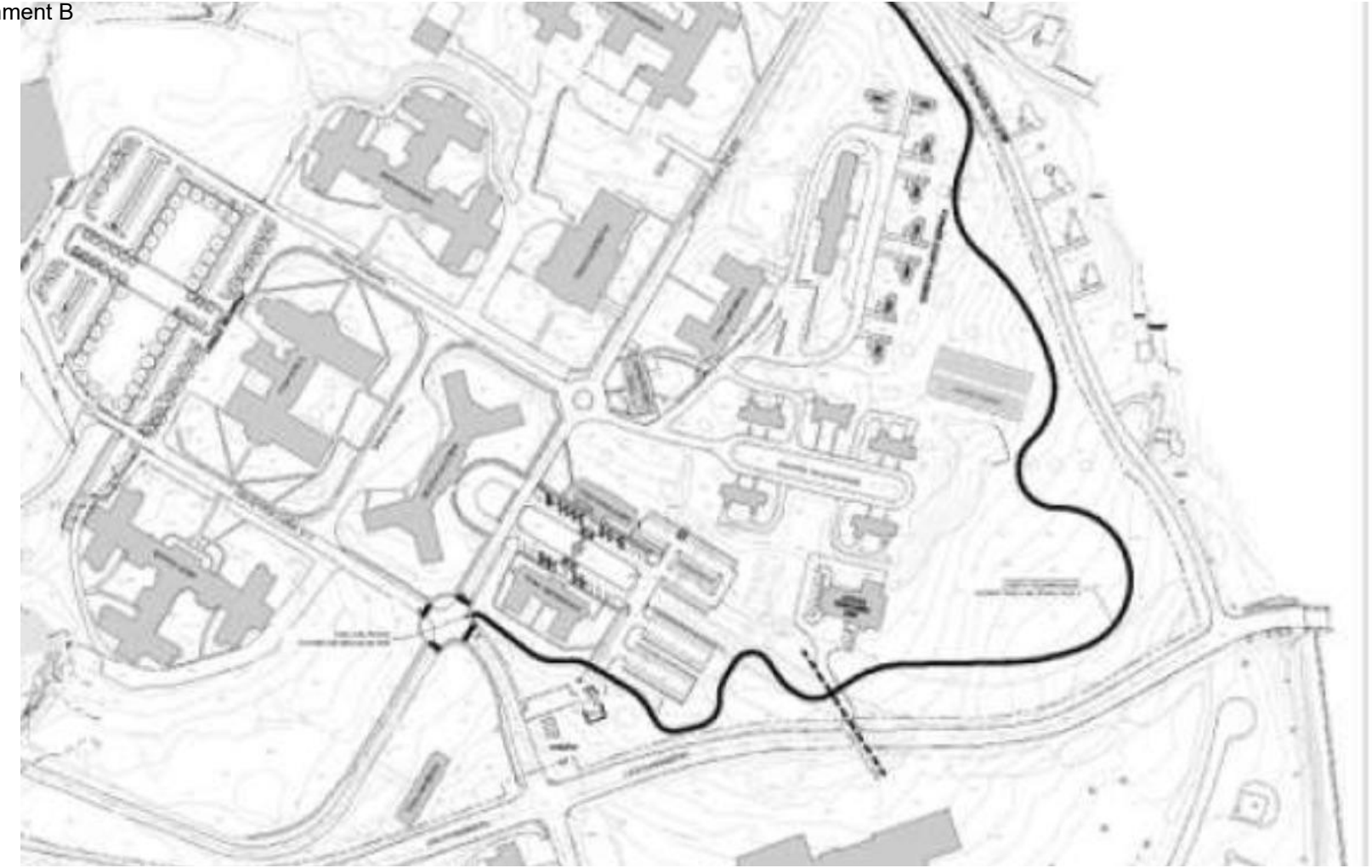
Tricia Ennis is an Emmy and AP award-winning journalist, Tricia has spent more than a decade working in digital and broadcast media. This report comes to you from Connecticut Inside Investigator (CII) — a nonprofit newsroom partnering with The Newtown Bee on a mission to inform the people of Newtown and Connecticut through investigative journalism and inspire the public through engaging stories.

Attachment B

Fruit Trail Signage

Andrew Mangold

Attachment B



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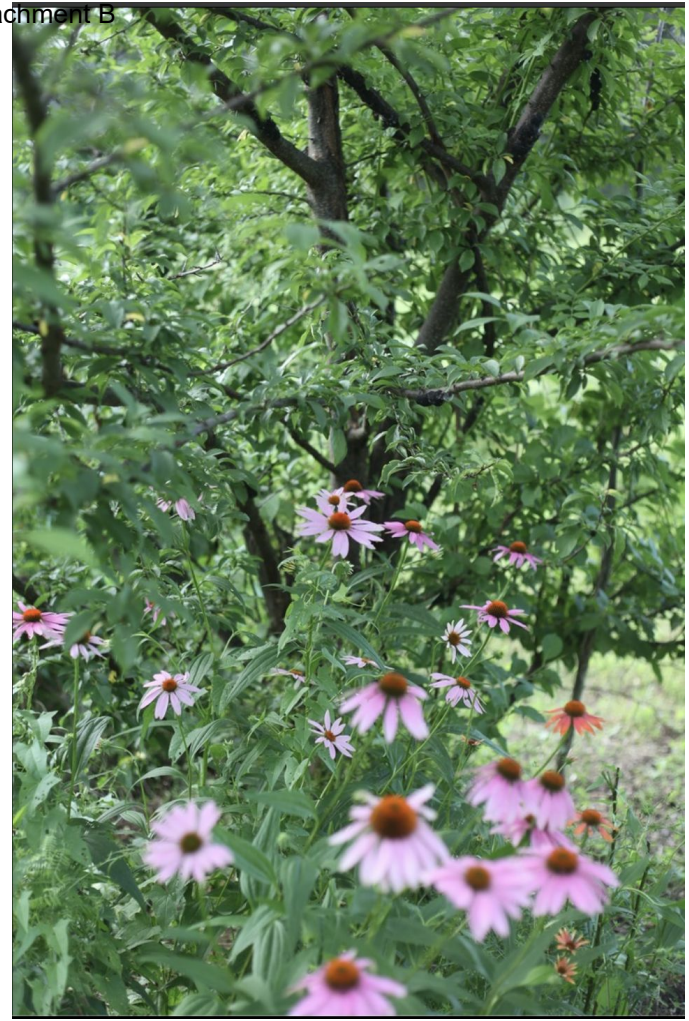

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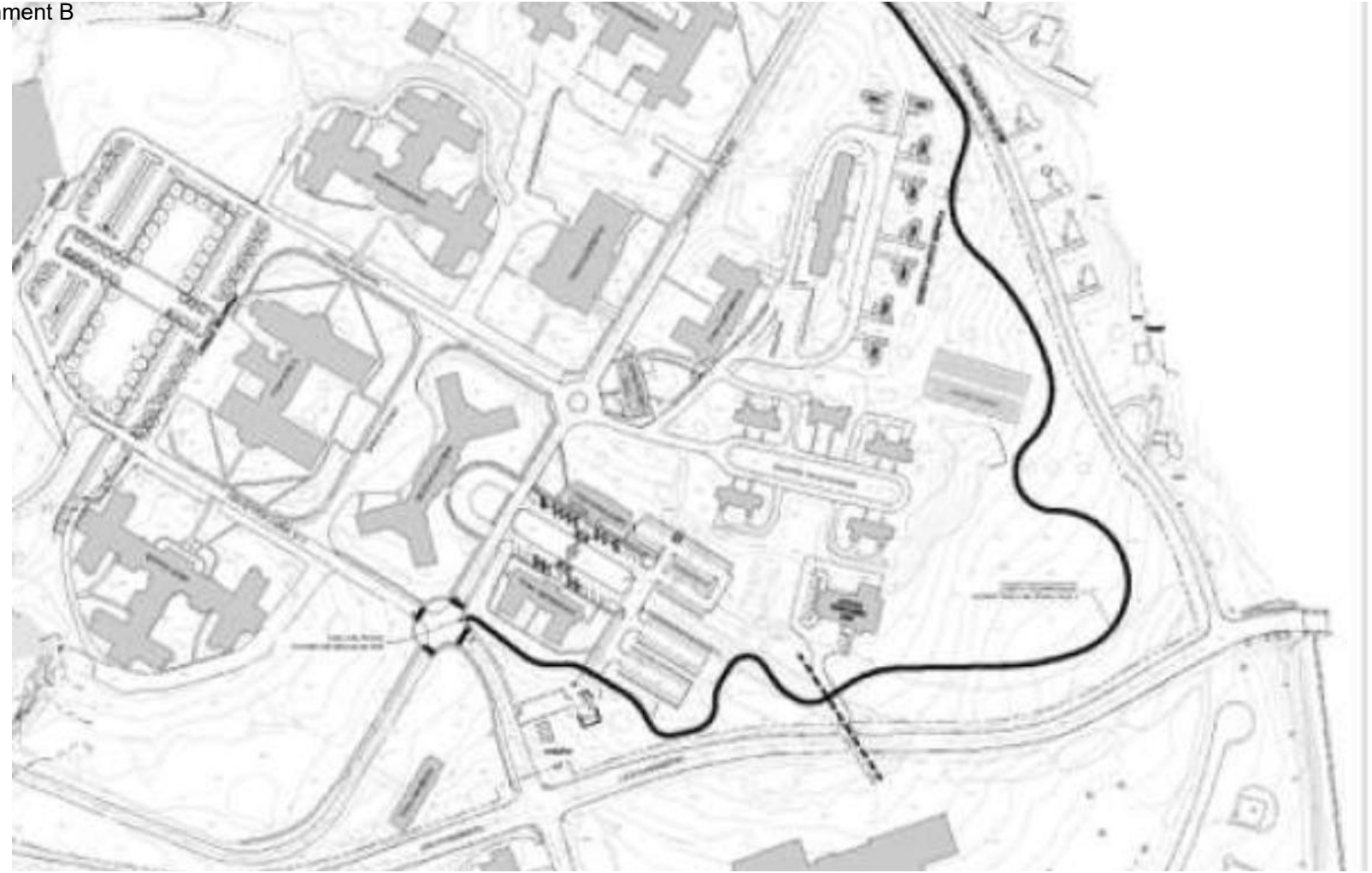

Attachment C

TOWN OF NEWTOWN, CT
G.I.S GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS
150'x240'- field

Data shown on this map were derived from a variety of sources at different scales. This is not a survey and no field verification was performed. This map shall not be used for the transfer of property. Please review the Town of Newtown access policy if you have any questions. By viewing, copying, or otherwise using this map you agree to follow the terms of use. If you feel that you cannot follow this policy contact the GIS Technician for the Town of Newtown.

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Attachment D

Newtown
COMMUNITY CENTER
EST. 2019

Newtown Community Center
Outdoor Playscape

Attachment D

Attachment D

Newtown
COMMUNITY CENTER
EST. 2019

Attachment D

Attachment D

landscape structures

NEWTOWN COMMUNITY CENTER

O'BRIEN & SONS
ELEMENTS FOR A GREAT OUTDOORS

MEO23664 • 7.14.2023

- Total Space will be around 5,000 square feet
- Property will be fenced in per OEC standards
- Increase amenities on the campus and benefits the Community
- Expanded programming space for our growing childcare programs
- The playscape will have signage that it is unavailable during hours of Community Center programming
- This will serve as the first phase of a two phase project to utilize and enhance the adjacent space on the campus

Funding is provided by the Newtown Community Center Special Revenue Fund

Newtown
COMMUNITY CENTER
EST. 2019