

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of April 9, 2019 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, John Dixon, Gail Friedman, Mike Santora, Mark Lurie, John Madzula, Mark Boland
Staff: Christine O'Neill, Clerk

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:03 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for March 26, 2019

Miss Friedman moved to approve the minutes from March 26, 2019. Mr. Santora seconded. All were in favor and the minutes from March 26, 2019 were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

No public correspondence. Mr. Lurie asked if there was a communication from the Bikes and Trails Committee, but none had been submitted to Miss O'Neill, the clerk. Miss O'Neill was asked to look into this tomorrow and forward the communication to the Commission.

AGENCY REPORTS

Parks and Rec - Mr. Santora said that Parks and Rec would be meeting tonight.

Inland Wetlands - Ms. Friedman shared that the Inland Wetlands Commission canceled their last meeting as well as their upcoming meeting, due to having no business.

Planning and Zoning - Mr. Madzula reported that on April 4th the Planning and Zoning Commission heard a Special Exception Use application for a winery on Pole Bridge Road. Some issues led to erosion around the driveway. Now the primary issue is whether the winery would conform to zoning in the area, but it more than likely does. It was deemed that there would be negligible traffic impact. There were some concerns about drainage. The hearing was continued to April 18th. The proposed development does not appear to impact the Pole Bridge Preserve.

Board of Selectmen - Ms. Kocet stated that there was nothing in the Board of Selectmen minutes would impact the Conservation Commission.

Bike and Trails - Since this Committee only meets once a month, Mr. Lurie had nothing to report. He will just follow up with an email to see if the memo discussed last meeting was sent.

Later in the meeting, Mr. Lurie mentioned that he walked Al's Trail from Commerce Drive across Fisherman's Trail and identified four or five work areas. Saturday, June 1st is National Trails Day and when the Bike and Trails Committee is looking to do the work. Before the event a training will be held by Paula Burton on trail building and maintenance techniques. Ms. Kocet asked if any of the training would pertain to invasives, and Mr. Lurie replied no; however, the work area near the sewage treatment plant did seem to be in need of invasives clearing.

Fairfield Hills Authority & Board of Finance - Mr. Boland reported that nothing occurred that would impact the Conservation Commission, except that the Land Use Agency has a new employee: Zoning Enforcement Officer Stephen Hnatuk.

DISCUSSION

High Meadow

Ms. Friedman shared that half the wildflower meadow has been mowed; Ms. Kocet explained the other half will be mowed in the fall, so that there is always something for the pollinators. She is also considering using black plastic to smother the grass and kill the roots, without killing the important organisms in the soil. There was a discussion about whether this would be plausible or unsightly.

Pole Bridge

No one had anything to report regarding Pole Bridge Preservation. The last time Mr. Lurie went with the Bike and Trails Committee was either in February or March. Ms. Kocet asked if he had seen any ATV activity. Mr. Lurie recalled seeing some tracks but he wasn't sure if they were from the tractor that had done the mowing.

Native Plant Policy

Ms. Kocet and Ms. Friedman have some outstanding questions about whether certain plants on the list are native. Ms. Kocet was at a native plant working group yesterday and handed off the list to a colleague there. The goal is to have the list finalized in a month.

Conservation Table

Ms. Kocet mentioned the Conversation Table may be converted to an invasive species theme as Earth Day approaches.

Invasive Task Plant Force

Dan Holmes wants to work with the high schoolers, but they are so busy that it seems unlikely. Ms. Kocet reported that they are now looking at scouts and other volunteers.

Website

Ms. Kocet had the webmaster make sure all the members were listed on the website, and that information for the pollinator kickoff was up as well. Mr. Santora said that information on native plants on the site was a good resource.

Newtown Earth Day, April 27th

Ms. Kocet reminded the Commission that one meeting remains before Earth Day. Ms. Friedman is working with the Girl Scouts to do seed bombs for the event. Ms. Friedman also spoke with Sandy at the Connecticut UConn Master Gardener Extension Office in Stony Hill Bethel to investigate obtaining educational posters on invasive species.

Newtown Pollinator Pathway Kickoff, April 7th

Ms. Kocet announced that the turnout for the event was excellent, with almost 95 people. First Selectman Dan Rosenthal made a proclamation, and other representatives from the Commission and Town Hall attended.

Ms. Kocet said Cherry Grove will be the next project. The idea is to clean up within the foundation, add topsoil, and publicize the project to get volunteers to come and plant.

When Mr. Sibley is available, Ms. Kocet would like to sit down with him and get an update on some of the potential Open Space properties, such as the Halfway River parcel. Ms. Kocet also began composing a schedule of availability for the Earth Day event.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boland moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Madzula seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Christine O'Neill, Clerk*