

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

### Regular Meeting

March 23, 2021 at 7:00 pm

Zoom Information

<https://zoom.us/j/94387582516>

Meeting ID: 943 8758 2516

Call-in: 1-929-205-6099

**These minutes are subject to approval by the Conservation Commission**

Present: Holly Kocet, Mark Boland, Mark Lurie, Michael Ablondi, Justin Kaiser, John Dixon, John Fung

Staff: Dawn Fried, Clerk

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Change “FFA” to “FHA”. Mr. Lurie moved to approve the amended minutes of February 16, 2021. Mr. Ablondi seconded. All in favor. The minutes from February 16, 2021 were approved.

### OTHER COMMISSION REPORTS

Bike and Trails – Mr. Lurie discussed a potential trail using the town right of way on Old Reservoir Road (off of Mt. Pleasant) which connects to Castle Hill Road. Mr. Lurie pointed out that there are several trails nearby and if the trails are patchworked together they would create a network of trails crossing “non-busy” roads.

Fairfield Hills Authority – Mr. Boland emailed the FHA board regarding two projects on the Fairfield Hills campus; the 5K race and the pocket parks. Mr. Boland is interested in learning about both projects. He asked the FHA where the 5K route is located and he also wanted the FHA to elaborate on the pocket parks. At the time of the Conservation Commission (CC) meeting Mr. Boland had not heard back from the FHA.

The Commission, in the meantime, had a discussion on the pocket parks. Mr. Boland described them as small, individual gardens planted by citizens on public grounds. The citizens would be responsible for maintaining the gardens. The Commission stated one advantage would be planting the individual gardens in place of the invasives. They agreed removal of the invasives would be beneficial. They also noted the disadvantages. The CC pointed out that the existing individual gardens around the fruit trail were unsuccessful and not maintained. The Commission does not want the same outcome to happen with the pocket parks. The CC was also concerned that existing vegetation would be disturbed. Ms. Kocet would like to attend a FHA meeting to get a better understanding of the project.

### DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Native Plant Policy – Ms. Kocet reviewed the purpose of the native plant guidelines which is to strongly encourage developers, homeowners and the town to use native plants, which naturally occur in our area. Ms. Kocet would like the resource guide to provide guidance on which native plants are most beneficial to the wildlife and environment and also to provide a reference of local resources and nurseries. Ms. Kocet stated that it would be beneficial to have two resource

guides. One guide would be geared for the municipal planters, landscape architects, developers and commissions. The other guide would be a shorter version geared for homeowners and town workers. The resource guides should be ready to launch sometime next month. Ms. Kocet stated she would like to also implement a Native Plant Policy for municipal properties and commercial developers (not homeowners). Ms. Kocet would like to recommend that the Native Plant Policy require that 70% of the plantings be native plants.

High Meadow Vegetation Survey – The 5-acre property on High Meadow was left untouched for three years. It is the section on High Meadow the farmer hasn't hayed. Bryan Connelly was contracted by the Conservation Commission over three years ago to prepare a vegetative study of the section. Mr. Connelly will return late summer or early September to complete the study. Mr. Connelly stated that the quoted price might be less due to the area previously being staked out.

### MISCELLANEOUS

The Commission had a discussion on the process of making recommendations on future applications. The Commission agreed that the last recommendation, regarding an easement, might have been better being tabled to the next meeting. That would have given the Commission more time for a site walk. The Commissioners discussed also reaching out to Rob Sibley for questions or clarification. They described Mr. Sibley as "having a wealth of information".

Mr. Lurie discussed a trail that Paula Burton, a Newtown resident, would like to create. The trail would be located on town open space on Castle Hill. Ms. Kocet stated that Ms. Burton should attend a Conservation Commission meeting and explain her plans for the trail. Mr. Lurie stated that he would reach out to Ms. Burton with meeting dates.

### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boland moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Dixon seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Fried