

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

January 25, 2022 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, Mark Boland, Michael Ablondi, Mark Lurie, John Fung

Staff: Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Land Use, Dawn Fried, Clerk

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Lurie moved to approve the minutes of November 9, 2021. Mr. Ablondi seconded. All in favor. The minutes from November 9, 2021 were approved.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Set CC Calendar for 2022

Mr. Lurie moved to accept the CC calendar for 2022. Mr. Ablondi seconded. All in favor.

The Commission voted on meeting the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month, but unless needed they will only meet once a month on the 4th Tuesday.

Election of Officers

Mr. Boland moved to elect the current slate for 2022 which is Ms. Kocet as Chairman and Mr. Boland as Vice-Chair. Mr. Fung seconded. All in favor.

Turkey Hill Open Space Discussion

Mr. Sibley spoke about the trails and public access on the Turkey Hill open space. Mr. Sibley stated the Commission's door is always open to the public and is always welcome. A neighbor reached out to Mr. Sibley in the fall and was interested in coming to a CC meeting. Mr. Sibley hasn't heard back. Mr. Sibley explained that the end goal for the Turkey Hill open space is for passive recreation and habitats for wildlife.

Mr. Sibley gave a brief update of Mr. Dievert's 2-phase project, which the CC had previously approved. Mr. Dievert planted 3 of the 6 Eastern Hemlocks on the Town's open space, which abuts his property. The trees will create a visual buffer and habitat enhancement.

Open Space Evaluation Process

Ms. Kocet asked the Commission their thoughts on how to visit and evaluate the town's open space parcels. Mr. Fung suggested at least 2 people go at a time. Mr. Sibley stated there are over 400 open space parcels in town, most of them unmarked. The open space files are in the office for their information. Mr. Sibley stated there is also an open space inspection form on the CC website. The form would be a great place to make notes of structures, species and other information found on the properties. After the forms are filled out they can be added to the files in the Land Use Agency.

Other Commission Reports

Trail Committee – Mr. Lurie went on a trail walk with the Trail Committee along the Nunnawauk trail system, which is part of an old farm road and "Yahoo Hill". Mr. Lurie explained the trail sits on top of a berm. Mr. Sibley stated the berm was built for drainage for farmland. Mr. Lurie stated the Trail Committee suggested cutting a trail through High Meadow connecting the

Nunnawauk trail with the Fairfield Hills trail. Ms. Kocet did not like the idea. Mr. Fung suggested the Trail Committee submit a formal proposal to the Conservation Commission for review. Mr. Lurie will speak with the Trail Committee. The CC will continue the discussion at the next meeting.

Flowering Seeds for OS Meadows

Ms. Kocet stated Parks and Rec has purchased the native flowering seeds for the open space meadows. Fifteen pounds of "Native Pollinator Mix" are sitting in cold storage. Parks and Rec will spread the seed in the spring. The CC has to decide which meadows they would like to seed. Suggestions were: Pole Bridge, Deep Brook, Toddy Hill/Turnberry (8 acres), Dodingtown. The Commission will continue the discussion at the next CC meeting.

CT Invasive Plant Council Letter

Ms. Kocet would like permission from the Commission to write a letter to the CT Invasive Plant Council. Ms. Kocet stated the Council hasn't updated the invasive plant list since 2018. Ms. Kocet would like to ask the Council what their plans are going forward and also do some "fact finding". The Commission agreed this was a good idea and gave Ms. Kocet permission to write the letter.

Ella Schmitt

Ms. Kocet stated that Ella Schmitt wrote a book titled "Regeneration Garden Guidebook" for her high school project. Ms. Schmitt won the 2021 Newtown Conservation Leadership Award and currently has her poster titled "60 Harvests Left" on display at the Municipal Center. Ms. Kocet has asked Ms. Schmitt if she would consider creating another poster for the Conservation Commission. Ms. Schmitt stated yes, after midterms.

High Meadow

Mr. Sibley presented plant and tree specimens taken from High Meadow in the fall for the vegetation study completed by Bryan Connolly. The Commission went through the pile of approximately 35 specimens and decided they would choose six to display at the Municipal Center. The Commission was impressed with the variety, colors and textures of the plants. The Commission discussed the first study done in 2017. The plant specimens preserved from the 2017 study are believed to be in storage at Western CT State University. They will reach out to Tom Philbrick, former Conservation Commissioner, as to their whereabouts.

Mr. Sibley spoke to the Commission about submitting a report to the Board of Selectmen regarding the results of the High Meadow study. Mr. Sibley stated the report should highlight the current plant species on the property in comparison with the study done in August 2017. Mr. Sibley suggested a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Boland asked the Commission what their thoughts were regarding another study in the future. The Commission will add the discussion to the agenda for the next CC meeting.

Misc.

Mr. Sibley mentioned Earth Day on April 22, 2022. Mr. Sibley suggested adding "Earth Day" on the next agenda. The Newtown Earth Day fair is a great way for the Commission to reach out to the public.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Lurie moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Boland seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Fried