

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

August 8, 2023 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, Michael Ablondi, Mark Boland, Will Drew

Staff: Steve Maguire, Deputy Director of Land Use, Dawn Fried, Clerk

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Boland moved to approve the minutes of July 11, 2023. Mr. Ablondi seconded.

All in favor. The minutes from July 11, 2023 were approved.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Open Space Update

Mr. Maguire stated the open space transfers are in the final stages.

Open Space Usage

Mr. Maguire discussed different ideas regarding open space usage, for example outreach programs, community gardens and vegetative meadows. Mr. Maguire stated he would like to explore different options that would include the public. He suggested choosing different open space parcels and highlighting their features.

The Commission had a discussion on open space parcels and their talking points. A few parcels mentioned were Orchard Hill, Pond Brook and Pole Bridge. Mr. Maguire discussed different ways to utilize the properties, for example offer educational workshops for students, create paths for guided walks, plant neighborhood/community gardens and establish pocket parks.

Mr. Maguire stated the Highlands Conservation Act (HCA) could possibly offer grant money to fund these programs. At this time Newtown is waiting on approval to be part of the HCA from CT DEEP and Fish & Wildlife.

Other suggestions were to connect with farmers to utilize their farm fields for haying and open grazing, as well as utilizing goats for clearing invasives. Mr. Boland has been in contact with UCONN and the Catherine Violet Hubbard Animal Sanctuary for their support with housing the goats.

The Commission discussed whether there was a demand for this type of public outreach. They suggested polling the public for its opinion. One challenge would be parking at the open space sites.

Mr. Maguire stated that he would like to collaborate with other groups in town, one being the National Forest Association (NFA). Mr. Maguire is meeting next week with Shannon from The Bee and Trent McCann with NFA to highlight town open space. He is hoping the article will spark interest.

The Commission would like to revisit the open space sites and continue the conversation. Mr. Maguire told the Commission to reach out to him with any thoughts or comments.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Other Topics

Ms. Kocet had a discussion on textile drop-off bins. She stated Monroe has implemented these bins and it's a great way to recycle and repurpose old materials and unusable clothes. The bins would accept clothing and textiles that are not good enough to donate. Mr. Maguire explained that drop-off bins are prohibited in town because they become a dumping ground for other items such as mattresses and garbage. Mr. Maguire stated the bins are allowed at the transfer station. Ms. Kocet will reach out to Mr. Hurley, Director of Public Works.

Invasive Knotweed Management

Ms. Kocet stated there is a new group in town called the Newtown Knotweed group. They are a "community coalition to rid Newtown, Connecticut of the invasive weed that blocks visibility along our roadsides, takes over streambanks, and pushes out native plants." The website is <http://www.newtownknotweed.org/>. The group has been mapping out Japanese knotweed throughout town and plotting it on the website. They are hoping the website will help educate the public on how to destroy the invasive.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Maguire spoke about the algae issue on Taunton Lake. He explained that the lake's algae is typically managed by the aquatic vegetation, which pulls up the nutrients. Currently, the algae is thriving because the aquatic vegetation has been wiped out by sterile grass carp. The grass carp were added to the lake to manage the invasive aquatic vegetation. It was determined that too many carp were added. The situation is being remedied by reducing the number of carp.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boland moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Drew seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Fried