

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting

March 26, 2024 at 7:00 pm

Health Conference Room, Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

These minutes are subject to approval by the Conservation Commission

Present: Holly Kocet, Michael Ablondi, Will Drew, Mark Boland, John Robinson

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

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Boland moved to approve the minutes of February 27, 2024. Mr. Ablondi seconded.

All in favor. The minutes from February 27, 2024 were approved.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Discussion of Trail Repairs/New Trails on Open Space as requested by Newtown Bridle Lands Association (NBLA) - During the week Mr. Maguire walked the trail at the Boggs Hill Greenway with Ms. Van Buskirk, President of the Newtown Bridle Lands Association. While walking the trail they discussed areas that needed improvement and determined the direction of the path.

Mr. Robinson walked Boggs Hill Greenway, Farm Meadow Trail and the open space parcel on Silver Brook Lane. He discussed his observations and presented his findings to the Commission. The Commission thanked him for the information.

Mr. Maguire stated Ms. Van Buskirk has not submitted trail improvement plans at this time and recommended the discussion be tabled.

Discussion of Newtown Forest Association (NFA) Correspondence – Mr. Maguire thanked the Commission for filling out the open space rating sheets for Deep Brook Farm. He stated the property evaluation totaled 82.4 out of 100, which is favorable. Mr. Maguire explained that NFA would like financial assistance with acquiring the property, which would include a conservation easement for the preservation of Deep Brook Farm. NFA is currently in negotiations.

Mr. Boland moved to endorse the preservation of Deep Brook Farm. Ms. Kocet seconded. All in favor.

Discussion of Invasive Management/Beautification Plan on Silver Brook Lane as requested by residents of Silver Brook Lane - Mr. Maguire noted the residents of Silver Brook Lane were not in attendance and no detailed plans have been submitted. The Commission concurred that no financial assistance would be given. They would like a detailed description of the proposed work.

The Commission discussed creating a standard application for residents to fill out when working on Town open space. They also discussed an evaluation form that the Commissioners would fill out assessing the open space property. Mr. Ablondi stated it should be the same process for every open space parcel. Some items to consider on the evaluation form would be: Is anything desirable on the property? Vegetation value? Which invasives are present? Will mowing help

mitigate the invasives? Scope of the project? Preservation of native vegetation? Eradication of invasives? The Commission also discussed having the property evaluated by an arborist. Ms. Kocet and Mr. Maguire spoke about hiring Mr. Holmes to evaluate the vegetation on the properties.

Mr. Robinson drafted an application titled "Application for alterations to Open Space Areas". The Commissioners thanked Mr. Robinson. Mr. Maguire stated he will review.

Invasive Plants Concerns

Ms. Kocet discussed Japanese Knotweed and its impacts, including decreasing property value. Ms. Kocet stated it is very hard to eradicate. The Commission spoke about needing a licensed pesticide applicator. Mr. Maguire stated he will reach out to the Town regarding funds for eradicating the Japanese knotweed.

Earth Day Table – April 27

Ms. Kocet suggested the theme for Earth Day be Japanese Knotweed. The Commission agreed this would be a good opportunity to educate the public. Mr. Drew and Mr. Albondi can help with the set-up in the morning. Mr. Boland needed to look at his schedule. Ms. Kocet stated she registered the CC.

Other Topics

The Commission received a letter from the public regarding 6 Commerce Road and the proposal for 117 cluster homes uphill from Taunton Pond. The Commission concurred that the cluster home property is privately owned and not their purview. They will stay apprised on the 6 Commerce Road property

Ms. Kocet discussed "Lights Out" for CT migratory birds. She passed out brochures explaining the importance of turning off your lights from 11:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m. for April & May and Sept through Nov 15. Ms. Kocet stated lights distract the birds and 1 billion birds a year are killed by colliding with buildings.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted, Dawn Fried