

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of February 13, 2017 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: Jim Ryan, Cindy Joyce, Karlyn Sturmer, Holly Kocet, Mark Boland (departed at 7:27 pm), Chris Smith

Also Present: Mary Wilson, High Meadow Study Group

Absent: Tom Philbrick

Staff: Robert Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning & Land Use, Dawn Fried, Clerk

Mr. Ryan opened the meeting at 7:01 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for January 24, 2017

Ms. Sturmer moved to approve the minutes from January 24, 2017. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor. Mr. Ryan abstained. The minutes from January 24, 2017 were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Ryan presented an email given to him by Robert Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning. The email came from a resident, Susan Genua, 6 Meadow Brook Road, regarding an overgrown area of brush adjacent to her house which is on town Open Space. Ms. Genua would like the area cleaned up and is trying to determine whose responsibility it is since the overgrowth creeps on to her property. The Commission discussed marking the area with signage and going out in late spring to walk the property. Mr. Ryan will reach out to Ms. Genua.

ACTION ITEMS

High Meadow Management Proposal

Mary Wilson presented the final proposal for the High Meadow project. Ms. Wilson gave an overview of the plan and pointed out some revisions. The "Management Recommendations" section was revised to include the mowing and seeding of Site A, Site B and the Balance of the Meadow. Ms. Wilson described the recommended grasses and their advantages which are clumping, a deeper root system, requiring less mowing and increasing wildlife diversity.

The Commission had a lengthy discussion on prospective consultants and the available funds for the Quantification Study on Site A. The Commission discussed a quote Mr. Philbrick received from a professional consultant. Other suggested consultants were students and teachers, Master Gardeners and other meadow experts. The Commission will continue the conversation at the next CC meeting.

Ms. Sturmer made a motion to accept the High Meadow Management Plan. Ms. Kocet so moved. A discussion ensued. Mr. Ryan suggested waiting for Mr. Philbrick's input but Ms. Sturmer stated it was time for the Commission to embrace the plan and move forward. Ms. Joyce seconded. Ms. Sturmer, Ms. Joyce, Mr. Ryan and Ms. Kocet all in favor. Mr. Smith denied.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Parks and Rec – Ms. Sturmer noted that the Mad Dash was mentioned in the Parks and Rec minutes and that this event could have a negative impact to the High Meadow and should be addressed.

Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Committee – Mr. Ryan stated the SHPMC is continuing work at SAC field.

Planning and Zoning– Ms. Joyce made mention of a Monroe referral that is being handled by George Benson.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Web Page

Ms. Joyce projected the web page on the wall and the Commission had a lengthy discussion on its progress. During the past two weeks the Commissioners emailed their comments and corrections to Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Joyce. Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Joyce have been updating the web site. Everyone agreed it looked great and should go live. Ms. Joyce suggested inviting Julia Nable, a web page consultant, to the next CC meeting.

Stone Bridge Update

Don Moon Logging is approximately 50% complete. The weather has been a factor and at times making the driveway unpassable.

Earth Day – April 22, 2107

Mr. Smith will register the Conservation Committee. He will also set up a conference call with the Commissioners to organize the day. Mr. Ryan offered to do the printing.

TRACKING TOPICS

Parks and Rec Meeting with Ms. Mangold

Ms. Sturmer would like to discuss the approval process with Ms. Mangold in regards to the recreational uses at High and East Meadow. Ms. Sturmer referred back to a document titled “High and East Meadows Open Space, Dated 7/28/15” (attached). Mr. Ryan will set up a meeting with Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Mangold.

Kiosks

Mr. Sibley will be putting up new signs at each kiosk.

Native Plant Policy

Ms. Sturmer presented a draft document titled “Newtown Conservation Commission Proposed Policy Governing Use of Native Plants on Town-Owned Properties”. The purpose of this document is for the Town of Newtown to commit to the use of native plants on all town-owned properties. Ms. Sturmer would like to start the approval process in order for the town to adopt the policy. Ms. Sturmer would like to meet with First Selectman, Pat Llodra, and request to have the document presented to the Legislative Council.

Ms. Kocet moved to accept the document titled “Newtown Conservation Commission Proposed Policy Governing Use of Native Plants on Town-Owned Properties” and moved to present the document to the First Selectman’s office for review. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor.

Adjournment

Mr. Smith motioned to adjourn the CC meeting. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Fried, Clerk

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George Benson
Director of Planning

TOWN OF NEWTOWN
Land Use Agency

MEMORANDUM

7/28/15

High and East Meadows Open Space

The High and East Meadows has been designated as open space at the request of the Planning and Zoning Commission. This designated open space at the Fairfield Hills Campus is unique when compared with other Town open space. It is not a separate parcel of land as it remains within the Fairfield Hills Campus and the Fairfield Hills Adaptive Reuse Zone.

The High and East Meadows Open Space contains trails maintained by the Newtown Parks and Recreation, structures maintained by Public Works and allows passive recreational uses as permitted by the Land Use Agency under Newtown Zoning Regulations 6.03.300 (27), (attached). The open space remains under the oversight of the Fairfield Hills Authority.

The designation of open space can include stipulations allowing uses requested by the donors of the land. The Town being the "donor" of the High and East Meadows open space has specified via the Zoning Regulations that the land be utilized for passive recreation as permitted by the Fairfield Hills Special Event Permit.

The Land Use Agency, specifically the Zoning Enforcement Officer has the final permit approval for Fairfield Hills Special Events under 6.03.300 (27). The final approval is based on comments from all pertinent agencies including the Police Department, Fire Marshal, Health District, Parks and Recreation, Land Use Agency, Fairfield Hills and the Conservation Commission.

The jurisdiction of the High and East Meadows Open Space has to be shared by all relevant Town agencies, departments and commissions. The purposes for Town Open Space are listed in Newtown Regulations, (attached).

To comply with the Newtown Zoning Regulations, to be in accordance with the Fairfield Hills Master Plan and facilitate the management of the open space, the following "Declaration Document Concerning the High and East Meadows" is submitted for approval:

July 28, '15
A.F.

Declaration Document Concerning the High and East Meadows

7-28-15

The Town of Newtown agrees to perpetually preserve, protect, limit, conserve and maintain the land hereinafter described in its natural condition. Any proposed uses of the Town Open Space shall be contingent upon receipt of a Fairfield Hills Special Event Permit with review and recommendations submitted by the Police Department, Fire Marshal, Health District, Parks and Recreation, Land Use Agency, Fairfield Hills and the Newtown Conservation Commission. Any such use shall in no way endanger the conservation of the High and East Meadows.

The areas referenced are designated as "The High and East Meadows" (hereinafter referred to as "the Meadows") containing 65.46 acres located on a certain map entitled "Limited Property survey Prepared for the Town of Newtown, Wasserman Way, Newtown, Connecticut" dated November 1, 2013 by Brautigam Land Surveyors, P.C. which was filed on the Newtown Land Records as Map 8194 on March 11, 2014.

It is the purpose of this Declaration to ensure that the Meadows remain in their present, natural and open condition, and to prevent any activity or use of the area that is inconsistent with that condition or that will significantly impair or interfere with the ecological, conservation or open space values of the area, notwithstanding normal passive recreational purposes.

1. The following is from Section 6.03.300, Newtown Zoning Regulations;

27) – (added effective August 13, 2012) A community activity such as a fair, concert or similar type event conducted by non-profit Town organizations or National charities with local affiliations, in off-street areas, with no permanent structures allowed.

The event can include, sporting events, amusements, non-profit sales of merchandise/ food and for-profit vendors that are affiliated with and donate all or a portion of the sale profits to the sponsoring non-profit organization. The donation can also be in the form of a space rental fee paid by the for-profit business to the sponsoring non-profit organization.

Said permit will not be issued until the applicant has made provision for adequate parking as determined by the Zoning Enforcement Officer, nor will such permit be issued until the approval of such Town Boards, Departments or Agencies as is required by other Town ordinances or regulations is obtained.

The application shall be submitted 21 working days, but not more than six months prior to the event. Said permit shall be effective for a period of not more than 10 days. (added effective August 13, 2012)

2. The following is the Town of Newtown description of Open Space;

4.05.230 The land to be reserved for open space purposes shall be prioritized as follows starting with the most important:

4.05.230.1 The conservation and protection of wildlife habitat areas, natural or scenic features and resources, historic or archeological features;

4.05.230.2 The meeting of neighboring and/or community-wide recreational needs;

4.05.230.3 The expansion of existing open space and recreational areas present on adjoining properties;

4.05.230.4 The preservation of agricultural lands and soils.

4.05.230.5 The preservation, relocation and/or enhancement of existing trails having public access rights;

4.05.230.6 Connecting parcels of open space with existing or proposed green way corridors for pedestrian, bicycle or bridle paths;