

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting of June 11, 2019 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, John Dixon, Gail Friedman, Mike Santora, Mark Boland

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

Ms. Kocet opened the meeting at 7:03 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for May 28, 2019

Mr. Boland moved to approve the minutes from May 28, 2019. Mr. Santora seconded. All in favor. The minutes from May 28, 2019 were approved.

AGENCY REPORTS

Board of Selectman – Ms. Kocet stated there will be an agreement between Scudder Smith and the Town to keep the Pleasance property for the next two years. The Parks and Rec Dept. will be moving into the Community Center in July and the Police Station and Social Services will be relocated.

DISCUSSION

Grass Carp Project –The Commission reviewed the information they received from the applicant regarding the DEEP permit for the grass carp project. Ms. Friedman moved to endorse the grass carp project. Mr. Dixon seconded. All in favor.

High Meadow – Ms. Kocet stated she planted milk weed where the trail diverges in place of the Mugwort. Ms. Kocet would like to continue removing the Mugwort and replacing with native species. Some target areas are along the edges.

Pole Bridge Preserve – Ms. Kocet stated the Pole Bridge trail improvements are being postponed due to Al's Trail taking precedent.

Tammy's Garden - The idea of Tammy's Garden was created three years ago after the passing of Tammy Hazen, a beloved town employee. The project was postponed due to lack of funds. Recently Sara Middleleer and Mary Wilson restarted the project in conjunction with the Pollinator Pathway project. Ms. Middleleer drew up a landscaping plan which was presented at the CC meeting. Mr. Sibley reviewed the plan with the Commission and spoke about Tammy Hazen's dedication to the town. Mr. Sibley stated there is approx. \$250 that came from donations that Mr. Tait (Finance Director) will transfer to the "Tammy's Garden" fund. The project will get underway when enough funding becomes available, hopefully fall of 2019.

Director's Report

Mr. Sibley spoke about the Stonebridge Forestry Management Plan and the Stonebridge Habitat Management Plan which were completed in 2016. Mr. Sibley gave an overview of the Stonebridge projects to the newer Commissioners who were not present at the time. Mr. Sibley recently walked the property and took photographs of the regrowth. He gave a presentation of the before and after pictures of the property. Mr. Sibley also pointed out damage done to the Stonebridge kiosk due to vandalism. Mr. Sibley would like to repair the damaged kiosk.

Mr. Sibley spoke about an open space parcel on Castle Hill Road. In the past the open space parcel has been mowed by a neighboring Newtown resident. The Newtown resident is now moving and the question may be broached as to who will be responsible for the maintenance of property. Mr. Sibley wanted to apprise the CC of the possible situation.

Mr. Sibley spoke of a Farmer who is interested in creating a hay meadow on 9 acres of Town Open Space on Turnberry Lane. Currently the land is overgrown with Autumn Olive and other invasives. The farmer would like to clean up the land, till the land, remove the invasives, add manure from his farm and create a hay meadow. The Commission agreed it would be a vast improvement of the land but requested a formal farming agreement and maintenance plan before making a decision. Mr. Sibley invited the Commission to walk the property.

Mr. Sibley spoke about several Eagle Scout projects. Thirty-two volunteers on Saturday lead by an Eagle Scout worked on the Oakview Open Space Preserve on Al's Trail. The group cleared a half mile of overgrown brush and cleaned the kiosk. Mr. Sibley showed the CC pictures of the group and their accomplishments. Another Eagle Scout will be working on the trail between Rt. 25 and Orchard Hill. This trail has not been worked on in a very long time. The Eagle Scout will rebuild the trail and boardwalk. Mr. Sibley also reported on an Eagle Scout who will be building bat houses by Dickenson Park.

Mr. Sibley spoke about a Root Wad Project along the Pootatuck River that will be performed by Trout Unlimited (TU), Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and Town of Newtown. The rootwad project will prevent further erosion, deflect high water flows from degrading banks, and improve trout habitat which will contribute to a healthier river. The HVA presented the project to the Inland Wetland Commission for their information. The project has been in the making for three years. It was delayed due to the lack of funding and for a study of wood turtles requested by DEEP. The project will be performed in late September or early October.

Mr. Sibley spoke about a potential pedestrian bridge on the Oakview Open Space Preserve. The bridge would connect Newtown High School to the Oakview Open Space that leads up to the Fairfield Hills Campus. The bridge span would be between 44 ft. and 50 ft. long and would be made of metal and wood. Funding for the bridge would be through grants and town open space funds. More information will be coming.

Native Plant Policy – Ms. Kocet stated she is running into issues regarding the native plant list. Ms. Kocet has been receiving different information from different experts. Mr. Sibley suggested looking at the 2004 CT Stormwater Quality Manual.

Conservation Table – Ms. Kocet would like to concentrate on problem plants like mugwort, barberry and knotweed.

Invasive Plant Task Force – This past Sunday Ms. Kocet, Mary Wilson and Christine O'Neill pulled Mile-a-Minute vines on High Meadow. Mr. Holmes will walk the property and make a decision as to when to start the project. Mr. Sibley suggested getting a quote and securing the funds before the fiscal year ends on July 1, 2019.

Kiosks – Ms. Kocet would like the Commissioners to use GPS devices to track the trails.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Santora moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Ms. Friedman seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Dawn Fried, Clerk