

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of July 23, 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, Gail Friedman, Mike Santora, Mark Lurie, John Madzula

Absent: Mark Boland, John Dixon

Staff: Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Land Use and Christine O'Neill, Clerk

Public: Julian Castignoli

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for June 11, 2019

Mr. Santora moved to approve the minutes from June 11, 2019. Mr. Lurie seconded. Ms. Kocet called for discussion.

Mr. Lurie commented that Oakview Open Space mentioned in the minutes is not actually part of Al's Trail. Since he was not present at the meeting, he could not vote to amend the minutes as per Mr. Sibley. Mr. Lurie just wanted to point out that Al's Trail does not traverse the Oakview Open Space.

All members who were present at the meeting were in favor of approving the minutes from June 11, 2019.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public came forward to speak.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence had been received.

AGENCY REPORTS

Fairfield Hills Authority & Board of Finance - Mr. Boland was not present at the meeting, but had emailed Ms. Kocet that nothing concerning the Commission took place at the Board of Finance meeting. The FHA wants to have the REACH Car Show in the "homestead meadow" near the Victory Garden.

Parks and Recreation Commission - Mr. Santora said that there was nothing pertaining to the Commission. Someone at the Parks and Rec meeting had asked if fireworks could be set off next year for a Fourth of July celebration, but the location where they had been launched in the past now belongs to Catherine Violet Hubbard Sanctuary. Mr. Santora also mentioned that there will be a Gaga Ball Pit built in Dickinson Park.

Inland Wetlands Commission - Ms. Friedman said that the meeting had been canceled again.

Planning and Zoning - Mr. Madzula shared that nothing impacting the Commission transpired.

Board of Selectmen - Ms. Kocet stated that nothing of note had happened at the meeting.

Bike and Trails Committee - Mr. Lurie contributed that the Committee was upset with the closure of the Rail Trail. The Committee wondered if OSHA was closing the Trail as a downwind hazard, what about the residences and lumberyard nearby? Mr. Sibley mentioned that he had already emailed the Committee in regards to this and if they had further questions, they could invite him to a meeting. Mr. Lurie commented that he would have the Chair reach out to Mr. Sibley.

DISCUSSION

Robin Hill Road

Mr. Lurie noticed Newtown Trailway signs on Robin Hill Road near Ferris, coming from the Rock Ridge direction, up until a certain point where there's a pink stake in the ground. Mr. Sibley replied that there is 300 feet of private property separating it from the Open Space. Mr. Lurie also noticed that approximately ten good-sized trees were down. Mr. Sibley said Public Works would take care of it. Mr. Lurie wondered if the Bikes and Trails Committee could look into putting a trail in the Robin Hill area. Ms. Kocet suggested that the Commission make a visit before sanctioning a trail to be put on that Open Space parcel. Mr. Lurie suggested that they could wait until it cooled down in the fall to do that site visit.

High Meadow Wildflower Meadow

Holmes Fine Gardens submitted an estimate for the removal of invasive barberry at High Meadow. The total is \$3,482.96 but \$207.96 of that is tax, so the revised total would be \$3,275. This would be for cutting and then painting/torching the stems. Mr. Santora wondered if Holmes was a preferred vendor, and Mr. Sibley said not particularly but this quote is half the price from 2014 because the first time was an initial clearing and this is more like maintenance. The Commission discussed what area this would encompass.

Ms. Kocet entertained a motion to approve the quote from Holmes Fine Gardens without the tax. Mr. Lurie so moved. Ms. Friedman seconded. All were in favor and the quote from Holmes Fine Gardens was accepted without tax.

Pole Bridge Preserve

Mr. Sibley said that one of the boulders near the front of Pole Bridge Preserve was missing. Ms. Kocet asked about the pipe fence and Mr. Sibley said he would look into it.

Stone Bridge

Ms. Friedman pointed out that the logs blocking the entrance still had not been put back in place. Mr. Sibley said he would follow up.

Native Plant Policy

Nothing new to report.

Conservation Table

Ms. Kocet shared that the table now had information on invasives, including barberry, mugwort, and knotweed.

Invasive Task Plant Force

Ms. Kocet shared that herself, Mary Wilson, and Christine O'Neill have been pulling invasive mile-a-minute vine in High Meadow every Sunday for the past five weeks.

National Park Service Grant

Nothing new to report.

Website & Kiosks

Nothing new to report on the website. Ms. Kocet stated that she had put a lot information about invasives in the kiosk at High Meadow.

Newtown Pollinator Pathway

Nothing new to report.

Mr. Sibley gave an update on the small Open Space parcel of Laurel Trail. It was accepted two years ago but the estate had not been properly processed through probate. The better part of last year had been spent with Town attorneys working through the process. The probate materials are to be filed this week and the title will be received soon thereafter.

Mr. Lurie wanted to know who came up with the idea of putting up a bridge on Oakview. Mr. Sibley said it was his idea. Mr. Lurie stated that a bridge was also needed for Al's Trail, though he thought it was also important to link Oakview to Fairfield Hills. Right now, Mr. Sibley said that Iroquois and First Light would likely be helping out with funding for the Oakview bridge. Artel Engineering and Brautigam Land Surveyors both offered to contribute to the project. Mr. Lurie asked about siting specifics, and Mr. Sibley said it was looking to be near the confluence. Mr. Santora asked if Bailey Bridge is still up, and Mr. Sibley confirmed that it is but they have not yet finished the work there.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Santora moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Kocet seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Christine O'Neill, Clerk*