

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of September 24, 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, Mark Lurie, John Dixon, Mike Santora, John Madzula

Absent: Mark Boland

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

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for August 27, 2019

Ms. Friedman moved to approve the minutes from August 27, 2019. Mr. Lurie seconded. Mr. Lurie noted the sentence "Mr. Lurie would like to walk the property in the fall when the leaves are down and the area is easier to traverse." should be under "Robin Hill Road" not "Pole Bridge Preserve". All in favor. The minutes were amended and approved for August 27, 2019.

AGENCY REPORTS

Inland Wetlands – Ms. Friedman noted that the IWC will be hearing a new application regarding a gas station on Hawleyville Road.

Bike and Trails – Ms. Kocet asked Mr. Lurie if the Bike and Trails Committee will be working on Al's Trail. Mr. Lurie stated the Committee did not meet over the summer but the Committee had previously discussed working with NFA to open up the section off of Walnut Tree Hill into the Nature Conservancy. Mr. Lurie also stated that he received confirmation from the First Selectman, Dan Rosenthal, that the Bike and Trails Committee will be responsible for Al's Trail.

Mr. Lurie also spoke about Newtown becoming a bike-friendly community. Newtown roads will be the focus but there will also be an open space component.

DISCUSSION

High Meadow Wildflower Meadow – Ms. Kocet stated that over the summer 3 to 4 volunteers had been removing mile-a-minute, mugwort and barberry. Ms. Kocet also stated that Dan Holmes has completed the barberry removal project on the meadow. Mr. Holmes will also take a look at the bittersweet and autumn olive. The Commission discussed the High Meadow study done three years ago on the 5-acre test site. Ms. Kocet would like another evaluation done of the 5-acre site and if possible find a grant to pay for it. Ms. Kocet asked the Commission to look for grant options. Ms. Kocet questioned whether the farmer will start mowing again after the 3-year period is over. Mr. Sibley and Ms. Kocet will review the agreement.

Pole Bridge Preserve – Mr. Lurie stated there was an approval given by a prior Commission to allow trails at Pole Bridge. But due to conflicting property lines the trails were never completed. Mr. Lurie wasn't sure if this area would attract mountain bikers or not. Ms. Kocet questioned if it was worth the effort to create trails at all. Mr. Lurie stated that trails are needed in order for the public to enjoy open space. Trails make it easier to traverse and are tick-free. Ms. Friedman stated that it is also important to have open space for the wildlife. Ms. Kocet agreed that wildlife habitat is important.

Robin Hill Open Space – The Commission discussed Robin Hill and its potential for trails.

Conservation Table – Continues to focus on invasives.

Invasive Task Plant Force –The Bee ran an article about the work being done by the invasive task force. The article also mentioned the need for more volunteers.

Website – Ms. Kocet spoke with the website master, Keith Ciociola, Shiftclick.com. Ms. Kocet will be sending Mr. Ciociola pictures of invasives to add to the website. Ms. Kocet asked the Commission to take a look at the website and give their input.

Newtown Pollinator Pathway – Ms. Kocet stated that a pollinator garden was created last week at the Newtown Animal Shelter. Ms. Kocet also stated that Parks and Rec will begin planting Tammy's Garden at the Municipal Center with trees and shrubs starting in mid-October.

Deputy Director's Report – Mr. Sibley spoke about the Stonebridge forestry project that began in 2015. Mr. Sibley described how successful the project was and urged the new Commissioners to visit the site. Mr. Lurie questioned if Laurel Trail would be a candidate for a forestry project. Mr. Sibley stated the property needs to be cleared and is currently impassable.

Mr. Lurie asked Mr. Sibley about an email that was sent to Mr. Sibley regarding trails at Robin Hill. The email was prompted by the minutes from the last CC meeting. Mr. Sibley responded that he had received the email and referred it to the Bike and Trails committee. Mr. Lurie is not sure at this time if the question has been answered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Discussion of a Possible Land Acquisition

Ms. Friedman moved to open the Executive Session at 7:34 pm for the discussion of a possible land acquisition. Mr. Madzula seconded. All in favor.

Ms. Friedman moved to close the Executive Session at 7:39 pm. Mr. Lurie seconded. All in favor.

Mr. Lurie moved to approve the acceptance of Application O.S. #19-01. Ms. Friedman seconded. All if favor.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Madzula moved to adjourn the CC meeting. Ms. Friedman seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dawn Fried