

Conservation Commission
MINUTES
Regular Meeting – July 23, 2013 @ 7:00 pm
Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

Present: Ann Astarita, Marj Cramer, Bill Darrin, Mary Gaudet-Wilson, and Joe Hovious; **Also Present:** Aaron Coopersmith and Martha Wright; **Staff Present:** Tammy Hazen, Clerk

These Minutes are subject to the approval of the Conservation Commission

The Public Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – None.

CORRESPONDENCE – None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Hovious motioned to approve the minutes of July 8, 2013. Ms. Astarita seconded the motion. Changes are as follows: Change “Bill Darin” to “Bill Darrin”. The minutes were approved as amended.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Review of Other Commissions – No updates.

Task List – Mr. Hovious discussed changes to the Yale Management Report. He has heard that the property transfer for Pole Bridge Preserve is imminent and that he has not received any specifics on the proposed trail system at FFH.

Open Position – There are still two openings.

Summer Schedules – The meeting for August 27th will be cancelled.

OLD BUSINESS AND ACTION ITEMS

Fairfield Hills Open Space

1. **Kiosks** – Ms. Wilson placed some cork boards in one of the kiosks. A wetlands brochure will be posted.
2. **Fairfield Hills Meadows** – Ms. Astarita drafted the West Meadow management plan and will be working on one for High Meadow. She would like to have a study done on the types of grasses there and will contact Sean Hayden from NRCS to see if he can complete a habitat and soils study. The commissioners discussed the timing of the field mowing. Ms. Astarita explained that because of nesting birds, fields should not be mowed before August and preferably only in the fall.

Conservation Easements – Mr. Hovious discussed the progress he and Chris Zakur have had in developing a list of conservation easements in town. They have been working with a list from the Tax Assessor and noted that the project is labor intensive.

Bike Trails – Mr. Hovious said that Phase II of the cleanup of the Batchelder property is under way and that the Trails Committee is looking into extending the bike trail that comes up from Monroe. They are also working on two bike routes around Dickinson and Treadwell parks. They may be interested in making a bike trail on the Pole Bridge Preserve once the property swap is recorded.

Dog Leash Flyer – The commissioners discussed the language in the flyer and dog leash laws. It was noted that there are not enough bags (at the dog stations) or trash containers available.

SUBCOMMITTEES

Open Space Inventory and Maintenance Subcommittee – The commissioners updated their progress on researching open space parcels; they will go to Fulton/Platts Hill property on the weekend.

Education Subcommittee

1. **Development of Website** – Ms. Wilson said that the GIS Department is hesitant to place the new software on the laptop. More discussion is required.
2. **Pamphlet on Wetlands** – The pamphlet is done and will be distributed and available to residents.

Invasives Subcommittee

1. **Invasives at Fairfield Hills (Japanese Knotweed)** – Commissioners Wilson and Cramer walked the campus with Dan Holmes to assess the invasives and storm damage. Mr. Holmes will draft a quote. They noted Japanese Knotweed on the West Meadow on Mile Hill Road.
2. **Possible Town Task Force/Subcommittee** – Commissioners Wilson and Cramer will discuss this with the First Selectman.

POCD – No update.

Al's Trail – The commissioners discussed the benefits of Al's Trail falling under the State's Blue Trail system. Ms. Astarita said this can be discussed at the CFPA meeting in September to see if this meets the criteria. The issue of whether all private property owners have provided permission for the trail was discussed. Confirmation is needed. Al's Trail will still maintain its name but as a Blue Trail, the state would advertise it and be kept up by their trail committee. It would be marked, cleared and given the care it needs and protected against recreational vehicles. The easements associated with the trail were kept in the First Selectman's office when Herb Rosenthal was in office.

NRI – No update.

STAFF REPORT

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Fish Kill on Deep Brook** – Mr. Hovious discussed a report of dead fish in Deep Brook along the stretch between the bridge near the manure pile to "oil creek". Mr. Hovious reported it to DEEP. In this stretch of Deep Brook there were no trout detected but the population above stream was fine. Some water monitoring samples in June showed elevated levels of nitrates, which could be due to sewage, fertilizer, or manure. The State sampled oil creek and found high conductivity. There is an investigation under way. It was reported that fishing during the spring in this area was very good so the issue is very recent. Ms. Astarita said she received a call in April or May saying the stream was blue, but in her walk she found no staining or indication of residues. It was noted that there are two existing sources of odor in the area from sewer pipes. Ms. Wilson said she is concerned over areas in the corn fields and meadows where certain quadrants turn yellow while other areas are green.

After further discussion, Ms. Cramer motioned to go into Executive Session at 9:05 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hovious and unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted by Tammy Hazen