

**Conservation Commission**

**MINUTES**

**Special Meeting**

**March 19, 2014 at 3:30 pm**

Meeting Room #3, Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

*These Minutes are Subject to Approval by the Conservation Commission*

**Present:** Ann Astarita, Joe Hovious, Steve Gogliettino, Mary Gaudet-Wilson, Karlyn Sturmer; **Staff Present:** George Benson, Director of Planning and Land Use; Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning and Land Use; and Pat Llodra, First Selectman.

Ms. Astarita opened by stating the meeting is to discuss the transfer of Dept. of Agriculture (DoA) land to the Katherine Violet Hubbard Foundation. Mr. Hovious motioned to go into Executive Session at 3:31 pm. Ms. Sturmer seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. At 3:33 pm Ms. Astarita resumed the public meeting, stating they were informed the commission could not have an executive session because it was not properly noticed. Mr. Benson and Mr. Sibley joined the meeting.

Mr. Benson discussed the role of the Conservation Commission in regards to open space, that it is an advisory board that has control over open space the town gives them to manage. He said the commission has done a great job and are respected. Ms. Astarita said the commission has been encouraged to work with the DoA to obtain the parcel as open space and shared concerns about precedence. Mr. Benson said they have been working with the DoA to obtain the parcel for many years and this project was extraordinary, unique and very sensitive. Mr. Benson said the parcel was never conveyed but was initially passed by legislation pending further approvals of the DoA. He noted that the commission will be part of the review process and that staff is aware of the environmental sensitivity. (Ms. Llodra entered the meeting at 3:44 pm.)

Ms. Astarita, Mr. Hovious, Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Wilson voiced their concerns over the importance of the land, the protection of Deep Brook and the watershed. Ms. Astarita shared concerns about transparency, precedent and process. Mr. Gogliettino said he fully supports the development.

Ms. Llodra said this is an extraordinary situation and the commission's voice will be heard when the project comes under review with an opportunity to discuss necessary mitigation to assure there's no long-term harm done to the trout stream (Deep Brook).

Mr. Hovious asked for confirmation there will be no town road put in. He was reassured by Ms. Llodra and staff that there will never be a road, only a driveway. Ms. Sturmer explained difficulties of getting funding to control invasives on open space. Ms. Llodra discussed having a line item added in the budget for the commission to use for open space maintenance. *Mr. Benson and Ms. Llodra needed to leave for a meeting.*

Mr. Sibley and the commissioners continued discussion until Mr. Hovious motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Astarita seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 4:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tammy Hazen