

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
Regular Meeting – May 27, 2014 @ 7:00 pm  
Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT**

**Present:** Ann Astarita, Bill Darrin, Steven Gogliettino, Joe Hovious and Karlyn Sturmer; **Staff Present:** Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning and Land Use and Tammy Hazen, Clerk

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL BY THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Public Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** No members of the public were present.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Ms. Astarita said she received an invitation from UConn for a Coverts Project Training seminar (part of the UConn Cooperative Extension Program) that is held in September at the Yale Forestry Camp in Norfolk, CT. She will forward the information on to anyone who is interested. Also, the commission received a courtesy notification from Cuddy and Fedder regarding a Cingular Wireless Facility proposed for 30 Cobblers Hill Court in Monroe, CT (Attachment A)

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Mr. Hovious motioned to approve the minutes of the May 12th, 2014 regular meeting. Mr. Darrin seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as written.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

**Summer Meeting Schedule:** Ms. Astarita proposed that the commission have one meeting per month in the summer in order to take advantage of the good weather and work on marking open space, have subcommittee meetings, etc. After discussion, Mr. Darrin motioned to accept the concept of having one meeting per month during the summer with meeting dates being June 24<sup>th</sup>, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, and August 26<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hovious seconded the motion and all were in favor.

**Review of Other Commissions:** It was noted that a new Conservation Commissioner, James Ryan, will be joining the commission once he is sworn in by the Town Clerk. Mr. Hovious said Parks and Rec minutes discussed responsibilities of landscaping and other work done at Fairfield Hills.

**Budget:** Mr. Gogliettino discussed a previous meeting with Parks and Rec. where it seemed to be a consensus that it would be more cost effective if work is done in-house. With Parks and Rec's estimates, the commission will need to reconsider the estimate for the cost to build the pedestrian bridge on Al's Trail. Ms. Astarita will contact Dan Holmes about the Knotweed on the West Meadow.

**Website:** Ms. Sturmer discussed a meeting with Joanne Marcinek from Ask Joanne, LLC. (Attachment B) Information and materials will be submitted to Ms. Marcinek on an ongoing basis. Ms. Sturmer wants the information on the website to help build awareness and to be accessible and friendly. Mr. Hovious said the write ups that were done on open space (with links to the maps) would be helpful. They will meet with again in June.

**New Legislation:** Mr. Hovious discussed Bill #70. There was an elimination of the requirement for a site specific study to be done before a property was conveyed. He noted that the State will establish a state-wide GIS system (due to launch January 2015) that will be publicly accessible and include publicly-owned land (DEEP, State agencies, municipalities, and State-owned water supply lands). The commissioner must make the registry available on the DEEP website and add information on three State parks he selects; then an additional

ten parks will be added each year. The bill specifically allows DEEP and the Dept. of Agriculture commissioners to put conservation or preservation restrictions on lands they own.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

Ms. Astarita said in order to streamline activities and focus on key activities (without losing sight of the entire task list) she discussed a synopsis of the Strategic Plan (Attachment C) with a document entitled "Conservation Commissioner Duties" (Attachment D). Each task is led by one commissioner but each assignment may require a group effort (subcommittee). The commissioners will review Attachment D and return with revisions or questions at the next meeting.

**OS Parcels (Care and Custody):** Commissioners Astarita, Darrin and Hovious marked open space off Marlin Road. There was soil erosion found near the easement where sediment is suffocating the Trillium. Mr. Hovious discussed the history of the commission not advocating trails on open space. Ms. Astarita felt it was important for the public to have access for passive recreation and that having access to trails would ultimately protect plants and vegetation. Mr. Hovious asked whether the High Meadow should be included in the OS inventory. There is no specific identification (Map/Block/Lot or Unique ID), so it will be added using other specifics. It can be referred to by the Town Clerk's map.

**Acquisition of New OS:** Item tabled.

**Conservation Education:** Ms. Sturmer said she would like to develop presentations about invasives and work on promoting the work of the commission. She asked about sign-ups for residential invasive issues from the Earth Day event and the commission's responsibility on educating residents on how to remove invasives. This may be an opportunity for volunteers, i.e., high school students, to engage in assisting residents.

**Outreach:** Ms. Astarita spoke with a person who had been on the Ridgefield Conservation Commission. She offered to assist Newtown's commission in site selection, trails, etc.

**Monitor Key Natural Resources:** Mr. Darrin said he will take on this task.

**Reduction of Invasive Species:** The commissioners will work together on this item.

**STAFF REPORT** – Item tabled.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** – Ms. Sturmer motioned to go into Executive Session at 8:19 pm to discuss open space acquisitions. Mr. Darrin seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

Mr. Darrin motioned to adjourn Executive Session at 8:47 pm, which was seconded by Mr. Hovious and unanimously approved.

Ms. Astarita motioned to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Mr. Darrin. The meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Tammy Hazen

May 21, 2014

**VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS**

Hon. Steve Vavrek, First Selectman  
Town of Monroe  
Monroe Town Hall  
7 Fan Hill Road  
Monroe, Connecticut 06468

CC 2014-05-27  
Attach A

Re: New Cingular Wireless PCS LLC ("AT&T")  
Proposed Wireless Telecommunications Tower Facility  
30 Cobblers Hill Court, Monroe Connecticut

Dear First Selectman Vavrek:

This letter is respectfully submitted on behalf of our client, New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC ("AT&T") in furtherance of the municipal consultation process for its above referenced proposed wireless telecommunications tower facility. Included herein is an update regarding AT&T's review of the Mustang Drive alternative and AT&T's anticipated schedule for filing of its Siting Council Application. Thank you for your continued efforts in coordinating this dialogue with the Town and the community regarding AT&T's project.

**AT&T's Review of Property Located on Mustang Drive**

As you may recall, one of the 18 suggested alternative sites reviewed by AT&T as part of the municipal consultation process included property located on Mustang Drive. As explained in our November 27, 2013 correspondence, AT&T's RF engineers qualified this property as a potential alternative site. Thereafter, AT&T's consultants conducted additional investigations of this property, including field reviews. Based on AT&T's consultants' evaluation of the data collected for this property, AT&T decided not to pursue the Mustang Drive property given the space constraints on this property and visibility impacts, as compared to the proposed facility at Cobblers Hill Court.

Thus, AT&T will not present this property as an alternative site for consideration by the Siting Council in its Application.

**AT&T's Anticipated Siting Council Application Filing**

At this time, AT&T is finalizing assembly of its Siting Council Application regarding the proposed facility at Cobblers Hill Court. As discussed throughout this municipal consultation process, prior to the filing with the Siting Council, notice of intent to file the Application as well as notice to abutting property owners will be provided. Notice of AT&T's intent to file its Application will be published in the Connecticut Post and provided to abutters by the end of this week. The anticipated filing date is May 30, 2014. When filed, copies of the AT&T's Application will be forwarded to you and various Town agencies as part of the Siting Council process.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. Should you or any other Town Staff have any questions regarding this information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Very truly yours,



Lucia Chiochio

Enclosure

cc: Planning & Zoning Commission, Town of Monroe  
Inland Wetlands Commission, Town of Monroe  
Conservation Commission, Town of Monroe  
Hon. E. Patricia Llodra, First Selectman Town of Newtown  
Planning & Zoning Commission, Town of Newtown  
Inland Wetlands Commission, Town of Newtown  
Conservation Commission, Town of Newtown  
Michele Briggs, AT&T  
Kelly Wade-Bettuchi, AT&T

Newtown Conservation Commission  
Report on Education/Invasives/Website  
May 27, 2014

5/14/14

Ann and I met with Environmental Club at NHS. Brought samples of invasives and presented CC powerpoint presentation. Walked with students around campus to identify invasives for future removal. 15 students and 1 teacher attended. 5 students signed up to volunteer for invasives removal with CC.

5/17/14

Met with resident who had signed up at Earth Day booth for invasives' check on his property. Spent 90 minutes identifying invasives and educating him on removal. Very positive response from homeowner. Advise we offer this service whenever possible, based on commissioners who are willing to do this.

5/20/14

Meeting on CC website development with Joanne Marcinek, consultant, as well as Ann and Rob. Agreed to focus on four categories first: info about the Commission, Open Space, Events/Activities (to include volunteer opportunities), and Invasive Plants. We will submit information as it is written and meet again with Joanne at the end of June. (June 18<sup>th</sup>)

Submitted by,  
Karlyn Sturmer

Newtown Conservation Commission Strategic Plan  
January 22, 2013

The Conservation Commission is mandated under State Statute to advise and regulate the natural resources for the Town of Newtown. These duties were adopted on a local level through Town Ordinance 65 in 1963, and further amended in 2006. A portion of the duties assigned to the new Conservation Commission include these excerpts from Town Ordinance 65:

*"A Conservation Commission for the development and conservation of natural resources, including water resources, within the territorial limits of the Town of Newtown is hereby established under the name Conservation Commission. Among the natural resources with which the Commission is concerned are so-called "open space" or "open area" which shall be deemed to include any space or area the preservation or restriction of the use of which would (1) maintain or enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources, (2) protect natural streams or water supply, (3) promote conservation of soils, wet lands, beaches or tidal marshes, (4) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries, or other open areas and open spaces, (5) afford or enhance public recreation opportunities, (6) preserve historic sites, (7) implement the plan of development adopted by the planning commission of any municipality or (8) promote orderly development or (9) help reduce the demands of residential development for town services and resulting expenditures..."*

*The said Commission shall:*

- (a) Conduct researches into the utilization and possible utilization of land areas in the Town of Newtown;*
- (b) Keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wet lands in the Town of Newtown;*

*The said Commission may:*

- (a) Advertise and prepare and distribute such books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets as may be necessary for its purposes;*
- (b) Recommend to the First Selectman, the Legislative Council or the Planning and Zoning Commission such plans and programs (including the acquisition of conservation easements) for the development and use of open areas within the Town of Newtown as it deems necessary and desirable for its purposes;*
- (c) Exchange information with the Commissioner of Agriculture and Natural Resources."*

Acquisition and preservation of open space is an important role of the Commission. The Commission is advised of potential open space acquisition opportunities, which might be by outright gift, purchase of property, purchase of a conservation easement, or a combination of these. In addition, the Commission works proactively to identify potential open space opportunities. Commissioners walk potential open space and rate it as to desirability for the town using a standardized rating scale. The Commission then discusses the various properties at the regular Commission meetings, rank the properties in order of desirability for the town, and present the results to the Board of Selectmen with recommendations as to acquisition.

In addition to simple purchase of open space, any subdivision development in Newtown is required, under Planning and Zoning regulations, to give a percentage of buildable land as open space. The Conservation Commission, in its advisory capacity, works with the Planning and Zoning Commission to recognize the most desirable areas of a subdivision proposal for the open space.

Newtown Conservation Commission Strategic Plan  
January 22, 2013

The pursuit of open space has many positive effects on a community, one of which is financial. Studies have shown that preservation of open space leads to a decrease in property taxes. In order to have smart growth, which keeps a strong and sustainable tax, economic development, residential development and open space must all be present and integrated. Without open space, smart growth cannot take place.

The Town of Newtown and the Conservation Commission also seek available grants to help with property purchases. Newtown has already received a number of grants for open space purchases including \$138,775.00 for the Pole Bridge Preserve, \$157,000.00 for the Laurel Trail Property, \$500,000 for the Ferris Farm easements, and \$326,000 for the Loveland property.

The Conservation Commission holds its public meetings on the second Monday and fourth Tuesday of each month at the Newtown Municipal Center and encourages public participation. The Commission actively is researching how to protect more land and welcomes information regarding future open space donations and purchases. Individuals and groups may contact the Commissioners through the town's web site, or through the Conservation Official at 270-4276.

#### **5 Year Goals of the Commission**

##### **1. Continued care, custody, maintenance, marketing of existing OS parcels**

**Strategy:** The Town of Newtown owns almost 1900 acres of open space along with many additional acres of land preserved under a variety of conservation easements. Developing an effective program to monitor and manage these properties is necessary for their preservation and appropriate uses by the Town citizens.

**Actions:**

- Develop inventory of Newtown's open space parcels
- Mark open space parcels in priority order
- Identify site specific needs and prioritize those needs
- Implement an effective work process to manage and maintain open space
- Obtain funding through a line item in Town budget and other necessary resources to complete site specific needs
- Publicize key open space parcels to Newtown citizens
- Enlist neighbor support in monitoring open space parcels
- Enhance selected open space parcels for passive recreation or other appropriate uses

##### **2. Acquisition of Open space**

**Strategy:** The Newtown POCD as well as Connecticut PA 12-152 set minimum goals for preservation of open space for Newtown and Connecticut. Given foreseeable economic conditions for the planning period, a focused acquisition program with strong public support will be required to fund public acquisitions. Additional funding through grants, public support, or gifts will be necessary.

**Actions:**

Newtown Conservation Commission Strategic Plan  
January 22, 2013

- Identify desirable properties including connectivity, and rare jewels, generally in as large of tracts as possible
- Implement the existing program for review of potential open space acquisitions
- Participate in the POCD planning process
- Develop community support of additional open space acquisition (with education)
- Work with BOS and BOF for support in community capital planning/funding
- Develop possible open space acquisition plans including public and private funding, grants, CIP, and donations of property and money
- Active CC representation in funding/acquisition efforts
- Elicit public support of gifts of money or properties to be used as open space

### 3. Elimination/reduction of invasive species

**Strategy:** A management plan for reduction of invasive species must be implemented to preserve our town-owned open spaces and conservation easements for the protection of native plants, species diversity, wildlife habitat and recreational purposes. Invasive species on private property must also be addressed as encroachment onto town land happens as plants spread through various mechanisms

**Actions:**

- Raise awareness about invasive species through seminars, hand-outs, power point presentations, posters, etc.
- Continue efforts to reduce invasive species on town-owned open space.
- Encourage individual property owners to reduce/eliminate invasive species, particularly barberry, on their property.
- Coordinate actions with Park and Recreation and Highway Department.
- Educate area nurseries to voluntarily eliminate sales of invasive plants.
- Work legislatively to ban sales of invasive species at the State level.
- Work regionally (with other conservation groups and the HVCEO) to attain the above objectives.
- Make it clear that for effective and significant reduction of invasive species, there is a need for funding by the town and the state.
- Monitor the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group or IPANE websites

### 4. Education/public awareness of conservation issues

**Strategy:** All strategic goals are enhanced as the public becomes more informed and aware of conservation issues. All residents of various age groups should be targeted.

**Actions:**

- Complete the Natural Resource Inventory and have it available for Town and public use on a public website
- Present at least one seminar per year on conservation/natural resource issues.
- Work with school system – presentations, community service, and curriculum as appropriate.
- Have a presence at local “event” days – Earth Day, Duck Race, Health Fair, etc.



Newtown Conservation Commission Strategic Plan  
January 22, 2013

- Develop brochures and maps for various open space parcels. Target Pole Bridge Preserve for 2012.
- CC members to attend regional seminars of interest
- Consider one "Newtown Open Space Day" annually.
- Increase public awareness regarding the benefits of gifts of open space land or funding to the Town and the donor

**5. Outreach**

**Strategy:**

Coordinate with others both locally and regionally to achieve the 5 year goals. Commissioners can advance this goal by enlisting the support of local and regional groups, civic groups and the public at large.

**Actions:**

- Develop a website for the Conservation Commission and Newtown open space.
- Coordinate with Conservation Commissions and/or their supporting agencies in surrounding towns and other areas of the state and share information concerning environmental issues, invasive species, and open space acquisition, care, custody and maintenance.
- Coordinate with regional environmental groups such as Trout Unlimited, Housatonic Valley Association, etc.
- Work with local and regional grass roots groups on environmental issues.
- Input at the state level for conservation issues and projects
- Outreach to Connecticut DEEP and DOA as part of the PL 12-152 planning process.

**6. Monitor key natural resource issues in area**

**Strategy:**

Recognize that many issues in Newtown, in surrounding areas and at the state level, while not directly under the auspices of the Commission, can nonetheless impact on its work.

**Actions:**

- Monitor and respond to key issues in Newtown and surrounding areas which affect natural resources as necessary
- Identify and encourage dialog with Town naturalists re local environmental observations.



## TOWN OF NEWTOWN

### CONSERVATION COMMISSIONER DUTIES

A commissioner or two will be primarily responsible for at least one Duty; and commissioners are encouraged to work together. The commissioner responsible for each Duty will provide a brief synopsis of work done at each CC meeting. If the commissioner cannot attend a regular meeting, s/he will endeavor to forward an email synopsis for the meeting. Many activities (e.g., marking the OS, update NRI, presenting the final Power Point presentation, etc.) should be performed by all commissioners available. *Please* ask for and accept help.

- A. OS Parcels (care & custody) *Hovious*
  - 1. Monitor and manage properties, esp. (a) Fulton / Platts Hill; (b) Ridge Valley; and (c) Leopard Drive
  - 2. Update Inventory & Prioritize OS Parcels with Outreach, Education, and Natural Resources
  - 3. Budget for funding requests
  - 4. Publicize (with Outreach and Education)
  - 5. Enlist neighbor support in monitoring OS
  - 6. Enhance OS through trails, invasives removal
  
- B. Acquisition of OS (discussed in Executive Session as needed) *Gogliettino?*
  - 1. Ensure recently approved acquisitions are properly recorded (e.g., Trott, Kovacs)
  - 2. Identify desirable properties (look for connectivity, large tracts and special features)
  - 3. Implement program for review of potential OS acquisitions
  - 4. Community support & gifts for OS purchases (with Outreach and Education)
  - 5. Work with BOS and BOF to support capital planning/funding/budget
  - 6. Develop possible OS acquisition plans (e.g., grants, CIP, donations)
  
- C. Reduction of Invasive Species
  - 1. Monitor invasives including contract with Holmes Fine Gardens to remove knotweed from West Meadow
  - 2. Raise awareness of Invasives (seminars, handouts, etc.) in public (with Outreach & Education)
  - 3. Reduce invasives on town-owned OS
  - 4. Coordinate actions with Parks & Rec, Pubic Works, etc.
  - 5. Work with other groups to reduce invasives (with Outreach & Education)
  - 6. Monitor & support state work (IPANE, CIPWG, legislature)
  
- D. Conservation Education *Sturmer*
  - 1. Website development *w/Astarita*
  - 2. Review & update National Resources Inventory for CC use
  - 3. Sponsor seminars (with Outreach and Acquisition)
  - 4. Work with school system
  - 5. Have presence at local events (e.g., Earth Day, Duck Race, Health Fairs, etc.)
  - 6. Work with Care & Custody and Outreach to make brochures

E. Outreach *Astarita*

1. Create PowerPoint for Board of Selectman<sup>i</sup>, etc. presentation. Includes Budget information, mission statement, identify what we'd like done on certain parcels
2. Work with Education on website development
3. Coordinate with CC's in surrounding towns re: environmental issues, etc.
4. Coordinate with CVTU, HVA, etc.
5. Input at state level for conservation issues, legislation, projects
6. Work with CT Farmland Trust

F. Monitor key natural resources *Darrin*

1. Monitor and respond to key issues and surrounding area affecting natural resources (e.g., review other commissions' activities, inform CC when new subdivision proposed, land gifts transferred or planned, etc.
2. Work with Outreach & Education to encourage dialogue with local groups

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<sup>i</sup> Board of Finance, Budget, Legislative Council