

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
Regular Meeting – September 23, 2014 @ 7:00 pm
Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

Present: Ann Astarita, Bill Darrin, Steven Gogliettino and Joe Hovious; **Not Present:** Karlyn Sturmer and James Ryan; **Also Present:** Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning and Land Use; Kyle Moore, Land Use Intern; and Tammy Hazen, Clerk

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL BY THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Ms. Astarita called to order at 7:02 pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Mike McCarthy of 118 Alpine Drive in Sandy Hook (Certified Forest Practitioner for the State of CT) returned to discuss permission for a tree harvest on open space. Ms. Astarita felt based on information provided in the Yale Forestry report; she is concerned with harvesting the Stone Bridge Trail open space. The report states the health of this forest was the best reviewed and most esthetically pleasing; that there were an unusual set of trees growing together; and there were light-demanding invasive plants adjacent to the utility easement. Mr. Hovious said he had walked the area with Jerry Milne, CT DEEP Forester, and noted a drastic visual difference between the health of the forests on the Town's open space vs the State land adjacent where a selective harvest was done. Mr. McCarthy said that west/north of the gas line there is some nice timber but he would need to gain permission from Iroquois to access the site. Two other parcels they considered were Pond Brook and the Head of Meadow/Shepard Hill/Reynolds property. It was suggested by Mr. Hovious that the commission should reach out to neighbors ahead of time and that income from this venture should go into an open space fund to be used for work needed on open space. Mr. Sibley said the Reynolds property had the most invasive plants and agreed that invasive growth on the Iroquois property is a concern, but also stated that Iroquois is responsible. Mr. McCarthy said he is sensitive to neighborhoods and safety. He controls the truck traffic based on the area, taking into consideration the time of day, children at bus stops, etc. Ms. Astarita asked if Mr. McCarthy would review the Reynolds and Shepherds Hill open space parcels. Mr. Hovious will walk the Reynolds property with Mr. McCarthy and look for his notes from his walk with Jerry Milne.

NBLA Trails: Mr. Sibley discussed a walk with NBLA members on open space parcels near Eden Hill Road. Using GPS helped determine whether the existing riding trails continuously follow open space or if it veers onto private property. Mr. Sibley said most of the trails were on high and dry land. NBLA will work with private landowners if any portion of the trail falls on their land.

Ms. Astarita motioned to enter Executive Session at 7:50 pm; Mr. Darrin seconded and all were in favor.
Mr. Darrin motioned to exit Executive Session at 8:03 pm. Mr. Hovious seconded and all were in favor.
Ms. Astarita motioned to accept OS parcel #14-02. Mr. Darrin seconded and all were in favor.
Ms. Astarita motioned to have Mr. Sibley draft a letter of interest for OS parcel #14-01. Mr. Darrin seconded and all were in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Darrin motioned to approve the minutes of 8/20/14; Ms. Astarita seconded the motion; Mr. Hovious abstained; the minutes were approved as written. Mr. Darrin motioned to approve the minutes of 8/26/14; Ms. Astarita seconded the motion; Mr. Hovious abstained; Changes were as follows: Under Budget, 1st paragraph, last sentence, remove "...to remove invasives". The minutes were approved as amended.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Review of Other Commissions: Ms. Astarita asked Mr. Sibley about process with plans that are submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission are changed from what was previously approved by the Inland Wetlands commission. Mr. Sibley explained the process. Mr. Hovious discussed plans that Parks and Rec have for trails on Fairfield Hills; He will contact Amy Mangold to discuss.

Budget: Mr. Sibley distributed handouts to the commissioners and explained funding mechanisms for the Town; the budget within the Land Use Department; Capital non reoccurring budget items; and CIP funding. After a thorough discussion, the commission will discuss requesting a budget line item to help with maintaining open space.

Website: Tabled.

Comment and Vote on Annual Report for Town Clerk: After comments and minor changes, Mr. Darrin motioned to approve the Annual Report and that it be forwarded to the Town Clerk. Ms. Astarita seconded the motion which was unanimously approved. Ms. Astarita will send the report to the Town Clerk.

ACTION ITEMS

OS Parcels: Mr. Hovious discussed the Gadbut property along Al's Trail and that the commission needs to begin planning trail markings.

Reduction of Invasive Species: Tabled.

Conservation Education: Tabled.

Outreach: Ms. Astarita has been talking with a local garden club about the High Meadow. They may have resources to help but it is past the growing season.

Monitor Key Natural Resources: Mr. Darrin discussed interfacing with like-minded organizations in Town. The Newtown Forest Association, Pootatuck Watershed Association, Trout Unlimited, Iroquois, Aquarion, and the State DEEP were discussed.

Discuss BOS Presentation: Mr. Gogliettino will work on a presentation to the Board of Selectmen. The commission discussed priority parcels. Some of the items were: create parking at trail heads; Brook Heights/DeGraff; The new parcel adjacent to Gadbut property; delineate OS from the Gadbut's property with fencing; parking at Pole Bridge; Access to Taunton Lake; High Meadow (Preserve for meadow birds and pollinators, add pollinating plants); work on Eden Hill Trail for equestrian use or hiking; Work with CT Forest and Parks Association to make Al's Trail north of Dayton Street a Blue Trail.

After no further discussion, Mr. Darrin motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Gogliettino. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Tammy Hazen