

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of April 11, 2016 at 7:00 pm
Meeting Room #1, Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

These Minutes are Subject to Approval by the Conservation Commission

In Attendance: Jim Ryan, Tom Philbrick, Karlyn Sturmer, Cindy Joyce

Mr. Ryan opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Correspondence

Mr. Ryan presented a letter from Pat Llodra, First Selectman, regarding Chris Smith, a potential candidate to fill the remaining spot on the CC Board. Mr. Smith comes recommended by Herb Rosenthal. Mr. Ryan will reach out to Mr. Smith to discuss the CC and will invite Mr. Smith to the next CC meeting.

Approval of Minutes for February 8, 2016

Mr. Ryan requested a motion to approve the minutes from February 8, 2016. Ms. Sturmer so moved. Mr. Philbrick seconded. All in favor.

Approval of Minutes for March 14, 2016

Under **ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**, Candlewood Valley Trout Unlimited (CVTU), change “the kiosk taken down” to “the kiosk moved” and change “regarding the missing kiosk” to “regarding the missing materials”. Mr. Ryan requested a motion to approve the amended minutes from March 14, 2016. Ms. Joyce so moved. Ms. Sturmer seconded. All in favor.

Approval of Minutes for March 22, 2016

Mr. Philbrick moved to approve the minutes from March 22, 2016. Ms. Sturmer seconded. All in favor.

Administrative Items

Invitation to Gary Sorge - Mr. Ryan spoke about Gary Sorge of Stantec, an engineering consultant. Mr. Sorge will be presenting his analysis of alternative access ways to the permanent memorial site to the Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission (SHPMC) on April 13, 2106. Mr. Ryan asked the CC if they would like to invite Mr. Sorge to the next CC meeting. Mr. Ryan suggested it might be beneficial to invite Mr. Sorge to the next CC meeting to keep apprised of SHPMC process.

Ms. Sturmer stated that she would rather stay focused on the CC and does not want the SHPMC to be part of the CC nor does Ms. Sturmer want the CC to be a “subcommittee” to the SHPMC. Ms. Sturmer also stated that she wants to “derail” High Meadow as an option for the Sandy Hook memorial site. After a lengthy discussion the Commission decided not to invite Mr. Sorge to the next CC meeting and would rather obtain his information, if needed, in other ways.

Review of Other Commissions

Parks and Rec – Ms. Sturmer spoke about the proposed Newtown Fruit Trail in the West Meadow initiated by Andrew Mangold. Ms. Sturmer would like the CC to draft their position on native plants and would like the town to consider native plantings to help sustain Newtown's wildlife. Mr. Ryan asked Ms. Sturmer to draft a letter from the CC.

Inland Wetlands – Mr. Philbrick spoke about Inland Wetland application IW #16-06 from Hunter Ridge on Mt. Pleasant Road to construct 29 single family units. The Commission would like to look at the site plans and discuss any potential open space parcels with Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning and Land Use. For the record, the Commission would like a copy of the landscape renovations.

Board of Selectmen – Ms. Sturmer spoke about correspondence letters between the CC and the Board of Selectmen regarding the mowing of High Meadow. Ms. Sturmer discussed her position as being opposed to the rebuttal letter written by George Benson, Director of Planning. Ms. Sturmer voiced her concerns regarding Mr. Benson responding to the letter when it was originally addressed to the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Sturmer also felt Mr. Benson does not have the expertise needed to address the issues of wildlife or animal habitats and felt Mr. Benson undermined the CC. Ms. Sturmer spoke to Pat Llodra, First Selectman, regarding the mowing issue. Ms. Sturmer stated that First Selectman Llodra suggested meeting with Land Use Staff, the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen to work together on this project.

Mr. Philbrick spoke about a class project that was done in late fall of 2015. That project was more of an academic exercise than a management plan. Mr. Philbrick and Ms. Sturmer spoke about hiring an unbiased expert to submit a meadow management plan to discuss the benefits or lack thereof of mowing the meadow and the effects on the natural vegetation and wildlife. Mr. Philbrick questioned the cost to the town. Mr. Philbrick suggested an "experimental system" that would start by taking a small section of the meadow to study rather than the entire parcel.

Action Items

Stone Bridge Site Walk – The Commission agreed the Stone Bridge site walk on April 3, 2016 was very beneficial and gave the Commission direction to begin the forestry management plan.

Mr. Ryan requested a motion to request funds to retain Clark Forestry Services and to recommend Clark Forestry Services to begin a forest management plan. Mr. Philbrick so moved. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor.

The Commission discussed sending out letters to the abutters and inviting them on a site walk of the Stone Bridge property. Mr. Ryan will research the addresses for the abutters. The Commission also discussed getting the press involved to help inform the Newtown residents of the Stone Bridge project.

The Commission discussed the Iroquois grant request and Mr. Ryan will reach out to Mark Boland regarding the status of the application. The Commission would like to use the grant money for the Stonebridge project. The deadline is May 1, 2016.

New Business

Earth Day - Ms. Sturmer discussed registering for the booth on Earth Day. Ms. Sturmer has tried to register but has not received confirmation. Ms. Sturmer would like someone to follow up

to make sure the CC registration is taken care of. Earth day schedule: Mr. Boland is available all day, Ms. Padilla is available in the morning and Ms. Joyce is available to open the booth and work in the morning. Ms. Sturmer gave an overview of how Earth Day is managed and represented by the CC. Ms. Sturmer also explained the expectations of the CC in regards to setting up the booth and dealing with the public. Mr. Sibley will purchase a tent for the CC.

Website Update - Mr. Philbrick knows of a WCSU student interested in working on the CC website in the fall. Mr. Philbrick thought it would be beneficial to have the intern work with Newtown's tech department. Mr. Philbrick would like to coordinate and oversee the project with the intern. Ms. Joyce was concerned with an intern working on the website because interns are often short term and could leave without communicating the information needed to continue the website process. Mr. Ryan would like to reach out to Peter Ortali to help work on the website. Ms. Sturmer suggested creating a subcommittee.

Discussion Items

Priorities for year: High Meadow, Stone Bridge, CC Website. Ms. Sturmer suggested subcommittees to stay focused on the priorities.

Adjournment

Mr. Ryan requested a motion to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Philbrick so moved. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Fried, Clerk