

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

These Minutes are Subject to Approval by the Conservation Commission

In Attendance: Tom Philbrick, Karlyn Sturmer, Cindy Joyce, Mark Boland, Tele-conferenced: Jim Ryan until 7:38 pm

Staff: George Benson, Director of Planning and Dawn Fried, Clerk

Mr. Philbrick opened the meeting at 7:02 pm.

Mr. Philbrick served as acting Chair in Mr. Ryan's absence.

Public Participation:

In Attendance: Ms. Linda Zukauskas, Voices Newspaper.

Discussion Items:

High Meadow

Mr. Benson distributed and discussed a letter titled "Preliminary High Meadow Management Plan", dated May 23, 2016. This letter was submitted by Mr. Benson to the Board of Selectmen on June 6, 2016. The letter recommends a five acre parcel of Open Space on the High Meadow to be used as a "meadow test plot". The Board of Selectmen agreed to the recommended five acres and to cease the mowing. The management plan will be overseen by the Conservation Committee and an ad-hoc committee will be chosen. The letter recommended the evaluation of the meadow be conducted for three years.

Mr. Benson and the CC had a lengthy discussion regarding the management plan and the evaluation of the meadow. Mr. Ryan suggested getting advice and guidance from an expert to get a basic understanding of a management plan. Mr. Philbrick suggested hiring a consultant to prepare a preliminary plan. Ms. Sturmer thought DEEP might be a viable option to help with a study of the meadow.

The Commission agreed to invite the identified group of "concerned residents" to the scheduled CC meeting on August 10th or perhaps invite them to a Special meeting at an earlier date. Mr. Ryan will reach out to the group to coordinate a date.

Mr. Benson also discussed possible changes in the designation of the O.S. zone regulations. More defined zone regulations will better depict the O.S. parcels and not "pigeon hole" them into one category.

Ms. Sturmer asked Mr. Benson what the CC's responsibilities are in regards to activities at High Meadow. Ms. Sturmer pointed out that the CC was not contacted prior to the Mad Dash or other events that have been organized by town departments. Mr. Benson agreed that there should be an approval process that includes the CC when events can potentially disturb the landscape. Mr. Benson stated that the CC will be consulted on any proposed Fairfield Hills activities in the High Meadow.

Approval of Minutes for June 28, 2016

Under “Administrative Items – Board of Finance” change “fund” to “find”. Under “Web Page” change “Town Hall” to “Conservation Commission”. Mr. Philbrick requested a motion to approve the minutes from June 28, 2016 with the approved changes. Mr. Boland so moved. Ms. Sturmer seconded. All in favor. The minutes from June 28, 2016 were approved.

Action Items

Stone Bridge

Funds of \$1,200 have been approved to Clark Forestry Services for the first installment of the Stone Bridge forestry management plan. The Commission discussed at length the objectives and strategies of the management plan.

- Create a young forest
- Create wildlife habitats
- Add an educational element
- Utilize the press
- Meet with the First Selectman and abutters
- Raise public awareness
- Create a time-line

Jeremy Clark, Clark Forestry Services, and Lisa Wahle, CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection will be attending the CC meeting on July 26, 2016 to discuss the Stone Bridge project.

New Business

Ms. Sturmer passed out a draft letter titled “Newtown Conservation Commission Proposed Policy Governing Use of Native Plants”. The purpose of the letter is to adopt a native plant policy for the town departments to follow. Ms. Sturmer asked for feedback from the Commission. Ms. Sturmer would like to present the letter, after agreed upon by the CC, to the Board of Selectmen for their endorsement. The Commission discussed how to implement the policy.

Discussion Items

Web Page

The Commission will discuss the status of Mr. Ryan’s web-site maps at the next CC meeting.

Miscellaneous

Ms. Sturmer suggested adding a “Tracking Topics” line to the agenda under “Discussion Items”. Ms. Sturmer was concerned that topics discussed in the past have been forgotten. One topic in-particular was the status of the Deep Brook kiosk and other kiosks. The Commission discussed adding “Kiosks” and “Native Plant Policy” under “Tracking Topics”.

Adjournment

Mr. Philbrick requested a motion to adjourn the CC meeting. Mr. Boland so moved. Ms. Sturmer seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:23 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Fried, Clerk

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George Benson
Director of Planning

TOWN OF NEWTOWN

Land Use Agency

MEMORANDUM

May 23, 2016

From: George Benson, Director of Planning 

To: Newtown Board of Selectmen

Re: Preliminary High Meadow Management Plan

The Board of Selectmen has requested that the Land Use Agency staff develop a Management Plan for the future of the High and East Meadows located on the Fairfield Hills Campus. The Agency recommendations are to be presented at the August 1, 2016 Board of Selectmen meeting. However, due to the seasonal time constraints of some of the strategies this preliminary plan is being submitted.

As I stated in previous memos regarding the cessation of mowing proposal, the Land Use Agency staff is supportive of the High Meadow restoration. There have to be short term and long term strategies to achieve production of native wildlife. The Land Use Agency does not have the staff or budget to implement a meadow restoration.

Therefore to facilitate the restoration, the Land Use Agency is suggesting the following steps be taken;

1. That starting in the 2016 season the farmer cease mowing an approximately 5 acre section of the High Meadow located near the water tower, designated in the attached map.
2. That a condition of the establishment of this five acre "meadow test plot" be that the Board of Selectmen or the Conservation Commission appoint an ad hoc committee of town residents to manage the parcel utilizing volunteer workers and resources.
3. The Land Use Agency would like to recommend that the following concerned residents be considered for appointed to the ad hoc committee; Ann Astarita, Mary Gaudet Wilson, Joe Hovious, Holly Kocet, and Karlyn Sturmer.
4. That this committee shall submit quarterly reports to the Board of Selectmen or the Conservation Commission on the status of the project.
5. That after three years, a comprehensive evaluation of the meadow test plot shall be conducted to determine future restoration strategies for the entire High and East Meadows.

CC Mtg
July 11, 20
AF.



TOWN OF NEWTOWN, CT
 a.i.s. 100 RIVER ST. NEWTOWN, CT 06470

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