

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

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**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES**

WEDNESDAY September 1, 2010 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

Present: Kristen Begor, chairman, Patrice Gillespie, Dave Hapke, Jeff Coppelman, Kim Young, Chris Coyle, and Nick Lee.

Also Present: Patricia Sesto and Recording Secretary Liz Larkin, Karen Strickland, Wilton Family Y, and Stephanie Barksdale, Wilton Chamber of Commerce.

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Ms. Begor called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.
Ms. Begor scrambled the agenda to accommodate a presentation.
- II. Presentation by Karen Strickland of YMCA Wilton addressing childhood obesity

GOAL: To partner with community and other organizations to encourage physical activity and healthy eating.

GRANT: Funded by Robert Wood Johnson at \$52,000 as most students do not meet the physical fitness standards

ACTIONS:

- Working with Environmental Affairs to design kiosks to display park information and maps to promote safe walking links.
- place bike racks at key locations and possibly have a program where you can borrow a bicycle.
- Working with restaurants to highlight healthy menu choices.
- Working with school cafeterias to encourage healthy choices.
- Working to expand awareness of local farmers markets and farm stands, community gardens, etc. Working to promote interconnection of safe walking/biking routes.

KICKOFF: September 11, 2010 from 12pm – 2pm in Wilton Town Center. There will be a family bike parade into Allen's Meadows to Wilton Town Center Gazebo lead by First Selectman, Bill

Brennan.

III. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS –

A. WET#1985(S) – VOLLMER – 137 Olmstead Hill Road - proposed 4-lot subdivision with regulated activities within 100 feet of a watercourse.

Ms. Sesto described the location of the property and the proposal to construct the subdivision with 2 front and 2 rear buildings. Using the application map, she located the three wetland areas. She recounted a conversation with the engineer for the applicant who conveyed the difficulties in locating leaching fields and that constraint will drive the parcel set-up. The mitigation has not yet been submitted.

Ms. Begor asked where the driveway will be and Ms. Sesto showed the current driveway plan. Mr. Coyle confirmed with Ms. Sesto that this driveway is paved. She went further to state that the porous pavement is suitable for the site since it is flat. Conversely, since it is flat, soft drainage would also be suitable.

Ms. Begor noted to the commission that the limit of regulated areas is irregular on the south end of the parcel. Ms. Sesto confirmed that there is a 20% slope on in the southeast corner of the property, creating a peculiar limit of regulated area. Ms. Begor inquired further asking if the 2 houses that are within the 100 foot buffer can be pushed back or moved by switching the house and the septic location for less impact. Ms. Sesto confirmed that lots 2 and 4 would cause difficulties with this plan.

Ms. Gillespie expressed concern that the parcel would undergo large scale disturbance even though the houses weren't yet sold. She suggested that the builders do a staged bulldozing and land changes so that the land would only be disturbed while under contract for a lot-by-lot development for wetland protection.

Mr. Lee noted that, generally speaking, the owner would not want to maintain lots so they would not do substantial the site work unless they have a buyer. Ms. Sesto added that since this lot is not wooded, there is no need for the drastic clearing that sometimes comes with developments such as this.

Ms. Gillespie asked if the applicant considered just putting one house on the lot, instead of the proposed four. Ms. Sesto confirmed that this is always a consideration and asked Ms. Gillespie if she could articulate this suggestion as it relates to wetland impact. Ms. Gillespie noted that she would prefer to leave the 100 feet of wetlands alone.

Mr. Lee noted that the 100 foot buffer is regulated, but not restricted. Discussion ensued regarding the need for further permits once the subdivision is approved. A change in footprint of repositioning of the house usually doesn't require additional permits. The silt fence defines the limit of disturbance. If the modifications stay within the limit of disturbance then the permit is still intact.

After further discussion, Ms. Gillespie confirmed that it is her desire to see an alternative that includes less overall site disturbance to provide greater protection to the southern wetland. The alternatives could be fewer lots or a conservation subdivision.

Mr. Coyle asked Ms. Sesto if the area around the pond to the south will be common space. Ms. Sesto confirmed that the woods and pond are designated as open space, but the intended owner of the open space has not been declared. Usually such open space is given to the town or Land Trust, and occasionally the homeowners association takes ownership. Whether it goes to the town or Land Trust often depends on who owns land in the area; does it make sense to go to one over the other. Land Trust owns a small, adjoining parcel that connects the proposed open space to the the Middlebrook Farm Road cul-de-sac. The town-owned open space to the east does not have a direct connection to the proposed open space nor is the town's open space suitable for trails given its swampy condition. Who gets the open space will be subject to Planning and Zoning review.

It was the will of the commission to recommend Land Trust as the recipient of the open space, noting that a common ownership by the future residents may not foster the best long term stewardship of the land and Land Trust has a mechanism for periodic inspections as well as a connecting parcel. The commission also endorsed pursuing alternatives that keep the development tight to the north end of the parcel; even if the northern two wetlands are compromised, the trade off to protect the more valuable southern wetland is worth it.

B. WET#1986(S) – DRISCOLL – 149 Wolfpit Road - additions and replacement of septic system within 100 ft. of a pond

Ms. Sesto displayed map of this property, pointing out the property to be discussed and the expansion to the house and septic. There is a pond on the property and this is the 3rd time the owners are asking to add onto this antique home.

Ms. Sesto confirmed that the home has a “peculiar” septic system. There are low flow fixtures in the house as required as part of a previous repair to the septic system. They would like to re-do the garage and expand the 6-bedroom home.

Discussion ensued about the unusual configuration of the leaching field location. The mound configuration may not accommodate effluent drainage as envisioned by the Health Code. Further, since this is new technology that is being used and this is too precarious a lot to rely on unproven technology: there is no back-up location if this one fails

Mr. Lee asked if there was a neighbor concern for runoff and the development needs to account for new rooflines and driveway. The new driveway is a pervious surface but the applicant should address the concern directly. Ms. Sesto also noted that there is no grading shown on the southern end of the mound. Ms. Begor stated that it is not soil,

and that it looks like rock. Ms. Sesto confirmed that there is no ledge and that it is not “fill soil”, it’s naturally occurring. Ms. Gillespie thought it looked like rubble.

Ms. Gillespie noted that they would need to remove all the trees and Ms. Sesto confirmed that the whole piece would be diluted. Ms. Begor stated that there is no room and this is not a prudent use of the parcel.

Mr. Hapke inquired about the soil testing and Ms. Sesto confirmed that this was not completed as of yet. Mr. Lee would like to see the proposed mitigation for the loss of vegetation. Ms. Sesto conveyed the applicant’s position that if the driveway is moved further from the pond, the pollutants would be farther away as well.

Mr. Lee asked about the trees that would be removed. Ms. Gillespie responded that there are 12 trees being cut according to the plan, but in reality there are many smaller trees unaccounted for. Ms. Sesto confirmed that the property description is noted as “wooded” but the plan only depicts the larger trees. Mr. Lee has concerns about the runoff based on testimony provided at public hearings in association with an application at 27 Wolfpit Lane.

C. WET#1987(S) – BOCCAROSSA – 107 Twin Oak Lane – “corrective action” to restore a filled wetland.

Ms. Sesto explained the property and why the corrective action was enforced. This is at the Route 7 right-of-way land elbowing out. The property owners dropped the driveway to stop water from flowing into the house and put the excess dirt on their property and an adjoining property. These areas also are wetlands.

The fill has been removed but there is still some rough grading. There is an upland meadow and a wet seed mix. In addition, the trees proposed are smaller than normally accepted by the IWC. Mr. Lee recommended that replacement trees also be required for the white pines that have since died due to root damage.

D. WET#1988(S) – HOLLETT – 94 Raymond Lane - “corrective action” to repair clearing and regrading within 100 ft of a watercourse.

Ms. Sesto explained the property and why the corrective action was enforced. The clearing and regrading of the property done also on the neighbor’s side was unbeknownst to the neighbor. Regardless of prior knowledge, the neighbor has to be included in the enforcement action to prompt them to grant permission for remediation.

Mr. Hapke inquired about the plantings in the area and Ms. Sesto noted that it was not clear at this point. Ms. Begor noted that when they went back to look at the fill area, there was a white PVC pipe sticking up from the ground. Nobody knows what this is. Ms. Sesto noted that if the fill is over a leaching field, the health department will need to get involved.

The commission requested staff to confirm that the planting plan meets the normal restoration requirements.

IV. PLANNING and ZONING REFFERALS – None

V. ONGOING BUSINESS

A.Parks –

Ms. Sesto confirmed that everyone received Mike Conklin's report on the town parks.

Ms. Sesto reported that there was some wood down in Schencks Island. There are some smaller ash trees and no woodland to dump them in. The strategy is to have members of the commission or the public take the wood for personal use. The commission discussed access to the woods and where the wood can be retrieved. There are some 12' trees in between the central trail and the river and then more against the railroad tracks. Ms. Young noted that there is lots of Applewood on her property if anyone is interested.

Ms. Gillespie noted that the articles in the Wilton Bulletin that profiled several town parks were great.

B. Recycling – Begor/Hapke –

Mr. Hapke spoke about the new scale that has been ordered for the Transfer Station. He said that the land is being prepped for this now. Revised layouts for the station will be available for review by the subcommittee within the next 30 days.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

1.Tree Committee – Ms. Sesto noted that a letter to the editor by Jessica Kaplan for the tree and bench donations as this has been good exposure for the cause. Ms. Sesto reported that we have 1 bench and 3 trees added since the article.

Two Norway Maples by Village Market will come down in the fall. There were are four trees already donated to replace the maples. The Norway Spruce at the Library fell and will be replaced with the tree donated by Ms. Begor.

2.Energy Committee – Ms. Gillespie confirmed that they did not meet since the last update. There will be more happening with this in September.

3.Go Green Committee – Ms. Gillespie explained that her and Ms. Sesto have been assigned to get vendors for next year's Go Green Festival's Land and Water tent.

D.Regional Projects

1.FFD Co. Municipal Deer Management Alliance - Ms. Sesto reported that Wilton's Deer Committee is attempting to connect landowners with hunters. The economic Impact Study has gained a lot of attention from the media. She stated that the study will help convince residents that we need to redirect the funds to stop the perpetual expenditures needed to accommodate deer over abundance.. It is unrealistic to think recreational hunters will reduce the herd sufficiently. They will eventually get tired of spending too much time in the woods for too few kills. There are approximately 60 deer per square mile and the herd needs to be reduced to 10-12 per sq. mi. Mr. Lee asked about those wanting to participate and Ms. Sesto confirmed that we have more hunters than willing land owners. Ms. Sesto is trying to ease concerns from the public relating to sharp shooting.

Ms. Gillespie noted that she has a defacto deer exclosure. Outside the fencing the vegetation is eaten to the ground and 20 feet away inside the fence, where the deer cannot reach and the vegetation is far thicker.

2.Norwalk River Valley Trail – Ms. Sesto reported that the official award ceremony for the National Recreational Trails Grant is September 13, 2010. The ceremony will be at Union Park in Norwalk, at the northern end of the only completed part of the trail. The phrase, “where the end meets the beginning” is being used to describe this location. A second grant request was submitted to the federal government for technical assistance.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Liaison Report – Mr. Lee described how firewood is partially to blame for the spreading of the Asian Longhorned Beetle outbreak. He shared some personal stories of being up north where the firewood mantra is “burn it where you buy it” to prevent further infestation and contamination. He described a recent seminar in Wooster, Mass. That detailed the process they have sustained to confine and eradicate the ALB there. Ms. Sesto noted the affected area in Wooster is equivalent in size to Wilton, Ridgefield and half of Weston. Mr. Lee described that a 20-acre red maple swamp was cut down to remove host trees. If a tree is found with these insects, any tree within 1/4 mile is removed. The only trees that the beetle does not like are oak trees so this tree is recommended for replanting in the affected area.

The wood that is removed from these sites is chipped. The beetles don't move very far and they need a wood block approximately 9”X9” to survive, so chipping works. If the USDA is aware of an infestation, they will come in and remove all area trees no matter where they fall on personal or town property. The federal government will come back to the site and plant later to re-grow healthy trees.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Sesto asked if anyone on the commission had any Republican candidates for the IWC as they are short 2 members.

Ms. Gillespie asked if John Saverese needs assistance with uploading items on the website as there seems to be a delay. Ms. Sesto confirmed that he is being pressed upon by other department needs. She will again ask for updates and see about someone else to delegate this task to.

Ms. Sesto reported that she will speak to the Kiwanis meeting about landowner/hunting program on 9/15 and also she will speak about municipal deer management initiatives at a deer management conference on 9/14.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 05/05/10 – Mr. Hapke moved to approve the minutes and Ms. Young seconded the motion. The Minutes were approved 6-0-0.

IX. ADJOURN – Ms. Begor moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Hapke seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Next meeting will be October 6, 2010.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Larkin
Recording Secretary