

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

March 5, 2014 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL - MEETING ROOM "A"

Present: Dan Berg (Chair), Frank Simone, Susan DiLoreto, Donna Merrill, Jackie Algon, Jill Brown

Also Present: Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst, Liz Larkin, Recording Secretary

Absent: Kristen Begor (notified of intended absence)

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Berg called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. and welcomed the new members to the commission.
- II. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- III. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None
- IV. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Freedom of Information Act Discussion

Mr. Berg stated that he met with Ken Bernhard, Wilton Town Counsel, to discuss FOIA and how it relates to communicating via email and social media. Mr. Berg confirmed that any time commissioners discuss something on email, if there are at least 4 members involved, it must be legally noticed and open to the public. He described how municipalities are required to maintain transparency.

Mr. Conklin confirmed he recently attended a FOIA Conference provided by the Connecticut Council of Municipalities. He provided each commissioner with the documents he collected there and confirmed that the March 25th class is still available if anyone is interested. Ms. Algon and Ms. Brown are already signed up for this date and Mr. Berg asked Ms. Larkin to register him for this program as well.

The commission discussed creating a Facebook page which can include posts for Conservation related events and articles of interest. It could not be used for discussions or opinions.

B. Utility Tree Pruning Discussion

Mr. Conklin confirmed that Ms. Sesto sent an email to all commissioners making them aware of a hearing the Public Utility Regulatory Authority is holding in response to the Connecticut utility companies seeking permission to clear an 8 foot area on every side of power lines in the State. Mr. Conklin offered statements that were prepared by the New Haven Garden Club as this summarizes the position this commission would likely hold.

The commission agreed that the “right tree, right place” standards should apply so that the landscape is not completely changed with the work from the power companies. The ultimate goal is to plant trees in harmony with the utility lines so that there is wiggle room to keep trees healthy and out of the way of power lines. Mr. Conklin noted that there may be instances where the power lines should be relocated around historically important trees.

The Tree Committee has prepared a statement to be sent to PURA which the Conservation Commissioners would like to endorse which mirrors the statements from New Haven.

Mr. Berg made a MOTION for staff to prepare a letter to PURA to endorse the Tree Committee’s position, SECONED by Ms. Merrill and CARRIED 6-0-0.

C. Parks Reports and New Commissioner Assignments – Due to the snow cover, commissioners indicated they have not visited their parks.

Mr. Berg noted that the two new commissioners need their park assignments. As there were four parks that have no champion, Ms. Algon agreed to take Black Farm and Wild Duck and Ms. Brown agreed to take Cherry Lane and Spencer Rice Preserve.

In addition, the Set Aside Assignments were discussed and Ms. Brown took over the parcels that did not have a champion, and Ms. Algon took over Ms. Begor’s assignments as her term is almost complete.

D. Conservation Activity Log Updates – The commission discussed the working log and made updates whereby items that have been completed were removed and commissioners offered to take on the new items and be secondary’s for items already on the log.

E. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto reported that last month’s meeting was cancelled due to a snowstorm so she has nothing to report.
- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill confirmed that last month’s meeting was cancelled due to weather so there is nothing new to report. Mr. Simone noted that he has many deer that live on or near his property. Ms. Merrill noted that the hunting season ended on January 31st and will resume in September.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill reported that Wilton Land Trust is teaming up with the Aspetuck Land Trust to create a pilot project for a woods forum. This will include landowner outreach with peer to peer education starting in April for surrounding towns.

F. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership (FCRCP) – Ms. Merrill reported that 20 organizations bought into 53 actions. She noted that this Partnership is important so that all conservation minded individuals can share experiences and offer advice.
- ii. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Ms. Larkin reported that the demonstration trail is almost complete. The trail final layer has not been completed as the weather has been variable.

V. NEW BUSINESS

12 Gaylord Drive Encroachment – Mr. Conklin provided a copy of a letter that was sent to the owners and tenants of this property as there is an issue with encroachment on town property. He explained that the lawn has been expanded into Spencer Rice Preserve and includes a new retaining wall, a garden area and debris. If the owners and/or tenants do not respond to this communication, legal action will be taken.

Harbor Watch – Ms. Merrill stated that it may behoove the commission to invite Dick Harris from Harbor Watch to a meeting to describe water testing that they complete in the area.

VI. LIAISON REPORT

January 2014 - Ms. Begor was not in attendance so no report was provided.

February 2014 - Mr. Simone stated that he was not required at any of the meeting in February.

Mr. Berg is the liaison for March.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 1/8/14 –

Mr. Simone MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes as drafted, SECONDED by Ms. Merrill, and CARRIED 4-0-2 with Ms. Brown and Ms. Algon abstaining as they were not present.

VIII. ADJOURN – Mr. Berg MOVED to adjourn at 9:18pm, SECONDED by Ms. Brown, and CARRIED 6-0-0.

Next meeting will be April 2, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin
Secretary, Environmental Affairs