

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Telephone (203) 563-0180

Fax (203) 563-0284



TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

January 8, 2014 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL - MEETING ROOM "A"

Present: Dan Berg (Chair), Frank Simone, Susan DiLoreto, Donna Merrill, Kristen Begor

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

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Berg called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.
- II. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- III. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None
- IV. ONGOING BUSINESS
 - A. Parks** – Mr. Conklin confirmed that he has nothing to report since the last meeting for weather related reasons.
 - B. Work with other Commissions/Committees**
 - i. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill reported that the hunting season is in progress until January 31st and that the DEEP website shows that Wilton has harvested 150 deer so far; half of the 300 goal. She confirmed that the committee is working to complete the template for surveys for hunters and land owners to understand what was done well and what could be improved for the 2014 season. She indicated that Ridgefield and Newtown have had success in removing larger numbers and confirmed that the cold weather is when the deer move, which is conducive to hunting.
 - ii. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto stated that there was a recent article in the Wilton Bulletin relating to the completion of the

America the Beautiful Grant. She reported that the commission is developing parameters for the Annual Tree Steward Award. Ms. DiLoreto noted that Wilton will partner with Norwalk on the Tree Festival this year and that they have a significant donor. She stated that there is an issue with getting volunteers for this festival.

Ms. DiLoreto confirmed that five trees have been ordered for installation in the Spring and that Lars Cherichetti is going to place tags on the trees in the center for identification purposes.

- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill reported that Land Trust will hold their annual meeting on February 20, 2014 and it will be open to the public. She added that the Land Trust is planning an event to celebrate their 50th Anniversary.
- iv. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership (FCRCP) – Ms. Merrill explained that this group is working on strengthening partnerships with conservation leadership groups across Fairfield County. She indicated there may be some work that this commission could offer to complete once they have a plan in place.
- v. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Ms. Larkin reported that the demonstration trail is almost complete.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Wood Burning Furnace – Mr. Conklin noted that he has done extensive research on both sides of this topic. He stated that Nancy Alderman, of Environmental & Human Health, has taken a strong stand that these units are detrimental to health and the environment as they emit harmful levels of particulate matters. He indicated that he read a report with scientific data which Ms. Alderman contributed on, but the report was based on four sample locations; a very low sample set for a scientific research paper. The commission was reminded that four units currently exist in Wilton, with only three being utilized.

Mr. Conklin reported that he was in contact with Rod Tinnemore, a national expert on air quality for wood burning furnaces working with the State of Washington Department of Ecology. Mr. Tinnemore confirmed that his state

has strict guidelines on air quality and most units built earlier than 2010 are more polluting than the newer models.

Mr. Conklin confirmed that the EPA is preparing more stringent air emission standards, known as “Phase 2”, which will be effective sometime in 2015. The Phase 2 standards will ensure that newly manufactured EPA-compliant units will have reduced air emissions so that these units pose less of a public health risk than older units. Mr. Conklin explained the state of Washington adopted their own air quality standards. These standards are stricter than the EPA Phase 2 standards and has limited most outdoor wood boilers from being installed without prohibiting them outright. Mr. Tinnemore had indicated that banning is drastic, and that there are ways to limit them through environmental regulation.

Mr. Conklin stated that he also contacted the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) who assisted in providing zoning regulations and ordinances for towns that have ban outdoor wood furnaces in our state. The state regulations include specific setbacks of at least 200 feet from any property line, and the smoke stacks need to be higher than any building within 500 feet of the unit.

Mr. Conklin also reported that he spoke to Jeff Hallowell, owner of Clear Stack, who builds a retro-fit kit for existing stacks to be less of a hazard. Mr. Hallowell works with outdoor wood furnace manufacturers to incorporate his technology into their products so they can become EPA compliant under the Phase 2 standards. Mr. Conklin stated that any existing units would likely be grandfathered into the program and not necessarily have to meet the new standard.

Mr. Conklin also noted a website for the state of Vermont that teaches people how to properly use the unit and the differences between the newer more efficient and less polluting units vs. the old. They also have a program where someone can apply for a grant to install a unit. The older units are in the ballpark of \$7,000 whereas a new cleaner burning unit can run around \$15,000 to \$20,000. The retrofit kit can cost anywhere from \$1,000 to \$6,000.

Mr. Conklin stated that he has not yet spoken to Nancy Alderman, but would like more time to do so before the commission makes a determination on what steps this commission should take on this subject. He also confirmed that he is not certain if the pollutant rate on the existing units are the same as a wood burning stove that many homes in Wilton currently utilize. The commission also discussed that there is no way for the town to enforce a certain pollutant rate as we do not have the appropriate tools for the measurement. Mr. Simone stated that this would be expensive and he does not foresee the town paying for these tools. Ms. Begor added that if there is no regulation, there is nothing to enforce.

Mr. Simone asked what Clear Stack says about Nancy Alderman's efforts. Mr. Conklin confirmed they are acquaintances as they attend the same conferences, but that Ms. Alderman's data is considered old from the mid-nineties. Ms. Merrill asked what the advantage would be to not ban these units. Mr. Conklin responded that a new class of unit will be on the market soon which will be much cleaner burning than existing units. There may even be biomass burners in the future that might be as energy efficient and clean burning as propane or oil. The commission then discussed operator issues such as throwing garbage and other matter in the unit which can skew the output. Mr. Conklin noted that throwing anything other than wood can ruin the machine, and therefore would not benefit the user.

Ms. Merrill stated that she was not comfortable doing nothing during 2014 as residents may try to sneak in units while the regulations are not as stringent. She asked if we can increase the setbacks to make it almost impossible for any other property owners to obtain a permit. Mr. Conklin confirmed that the setbacks are under the purview of building and zoning. A spring newsletter article was considered but the commissioners agreed that they did not want to get too many people thinking about these units as this time. Mr. Berg and the rest of the commission agreed that a ban would be difficult and the 2015 guidelines will solve the issues. The output would be akin to an indoor wood stove so no further action will be taken at this time.

Liaison Assignments for 2014 – There are three open months for liaison assignments on the 2014 schedule: February, July and October. The

commission agreed that a new commissioner can be assigned to the later months, and Mr. Simone was chosen for February so that each commissioner has two months assigned for the year.

Set Aside Assignments for 2014 – The commission agreed that they would keep their 2013 assignments and any new commissioner would take over the open spaces left by outgoing commissioners.

Townwide Clean Up Day – Mr. Conklin suggested April 5, 2014 for this year's clean up day as it fits well with school vacations and the Easter Holiday when many residents are away. The commission agreed on April 5th.

VI. LIAISON REPORT

Ms. DiLoreto confirmed that she did not need to attend any of the meetings in December so she has nothing to report.

Ms. Begor is the liaison for January.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 12/4/13 –

Ms. DiLoreto MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes as drafted, SECONDED by Ms. Begor, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

VIII. Code of Ethics – Mr. Berg stated that each commissioner is required to sign the receipt of the Code of Ethics Booklet from the First Selectman's Office. All commissioners signed their copies and returned them to Ms. Larkin for filing. Mr. Berg also noted that some commissioners may have been recently contacted to be re-sworn by the Town Clerk.

IX. ADJOURN – Mr. Berg MOVED to adjourn at 8:50pm, SECONDED by Ms. Merrill, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

Next meeting will be February 5, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin
Secretary, Environmental Affairs