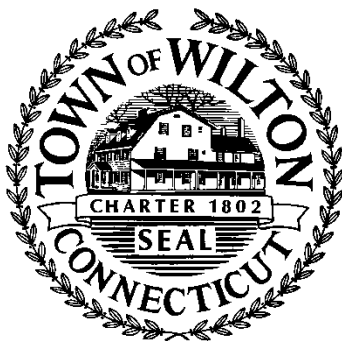


CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES**

March 6, 2013 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

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

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

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Ms. Begor called the meeting to order at 7:29 p.m.
- II. CHERRY LANE PARK DISCUSSION

The commission invited Cherry Lane Park neighbors to the meeting to discuss what can be done to improve the park, and to recruit volunteers for any improvements. There were four gentlemen that attended; Frank Fitzgerald and Jason Rothbaum from Shadow Lane, Julian Sproule of Newtown Turnpike, and Gil Bray from Little Brook Road.

Mr. Conklin provided the guests with background on the commission's roles and responsibilities as it relates to park stewardship. He confirmed the commission manages 1,200 acres of open space and noted that Cherry Lane Park is being chosen as a park where we would like to engage resident assistance. Mr. Conklin established that the commission regularly picks up litter, installed and maintains the Dogipot station, and adds gravel to the parking lot when necessary, and asked what other things the residents would like to see at the park. Mr. Fitzgerald confirmed he has two chainsaws and would like to assist with the removal of trees and brush when necessary.

Mr. Conklin stated that we would like to have the assistance, but there are times when the work would require an arborist for safety reasons. He then explained the delay in the removal of the fallen and leaning trees from Super Storm Sandy whereby, FEMA is reviewing the damage to provide the town up to 75% reimbursement for removals and clean up.

A discussion ensued about the debris that is left once the trees are cut down. Mr. Conklin confirmed that the logs are left to decompose which provides habitat for animals. The neighbors confirmed that some grass clippings and other items are placed in the watercourse that drains into the pond and it is causing degradation of the pond. Also, a muddy area after the bridge located in the southern portion of the park could use some updating. Mr. Sproule

suggested contacting Sally Harold with the Nature Conservancy for guidance on pond maintenance.

Ms. Gillespie suggested that trees are replaced when they fall in the woods. Mr. Conklin confirmed this is something that can be discussed during a group walk in the warmer weather. Ms. Begor suggested that the Conservation Commission booth at Tree Festival should encourage saplings or seeds to be donated for this purpose.

III. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None

IV. PLANNING and ZONING REFERRALS - None

V. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks

Mr. Conklin responded to Ms. Gillespie's email relating to the clearing of the slope in the front area of the new construction by Toll Brothers on River Road. He confirmed that everything that they are doing on site was previously approved, and that the area will be well landscaped once they are finished with construction. He also confirmed that they have an on-site monitor to avoid any ongoing issues.

Park of the Month – Mr. Conklin confirmed that he will begin to schedule the monthly park walks once the weather gets warmer.

B. Work with other Commissions/Committees

Tree/Bench Committee –

Ms. DiLoreto reported that there was no meeting in February due to lack of a quorum. She stated that Lars Cherichetti is newly appointed to the commission. She confirmed that the Tree Maintenance Agreements are coming in from property owners in the Center, which will help with maintenance costs. The committee is working towards a "Museum in the Street" using a large slab from the pine tree that recently fell on the Town Hall property. The Tree Festival is scheduled for May 11, 2013. Mr. Conklin stated he would work with Mr. Cherichetti to ensure the center plan map is up-to-date.

Deer Committee –

Ms. Merrill reported that the Deer Hunt netted almost the same harvest numbers as last year, even with more days and hours available to hunt, so this was a disappointing year. The low numbers are reflective of the lack of acorns

and large storms that brought down trees and caused deer to use different home ranges than previous years. Ms. Merrill stated that Sharp Shooting may be an option in 2014.

Energy Committee –

Ms. Gillespie reported that the gas line project is not going forward in Wilton as there were issues with the cost from Yankee Gas. This is disappointing to the chairperson, Bruce Hampson, who calculated that there would be \$400,000 in cost savings by changing from fuel oil to natural gas.

Ms. Gillespie reported that Wilton is now ahead of Ridgefield in the Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge. The committee is considering an electric vehicle charging station at the Town Hall Complex with the winnings. She stated that Ridgefield hopes to purchase a plug-in pickup truck with their prize. Ms. Gillespie stated there is a new contractor, Next Step Living, for the home energy assessments.

Go Green Committee –

Ms. Begor confirmed the Go Green Festival is being held on Sunday, May 5th. She asked if there should be a table for the Conservation Commission. Ms. Larkin will confirm with Pat Sesto.

Land Trust –

Ms. Merrill confirmed there is a Natural Resources Grant at Gregg Preserve for invasive removal. They are inviting foresters to assess the lands and then the payment for any eradication would be reimbursable through the federal government.

D. Regional Projects

1. Norwalk River Valley Trail

Ms. Sesto provided a written update via email to all commissioners prior to the meeting. Mr. Conklin confirmed that he and Ms. Sesto walked the Eastern Branch of the Wilton Loop earlier in the day with the Professional Trail Builders, Timber & Stone. He stated they were mapping the route with GPS technology. The permitting will take place this spring and fundraising will be underway to get this loop completed in the summertime.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Spring Newsletter – Mr. Conklin reminded the commissioners that the Newsletter articles should be written in advance of the next meeting in order to get it mailed to residents prior to the Go Green Festival in May.

Mr. Conklin will write an article thanking Dave Francefort for his efforts at Town Forest and another article highlighting Cherry Lane Park. Ms. DiLoreto will write an article about the Wilton Center Tree Plan. Ms. Merrill will write an article on invasives such as Garlic Mustard which will be timely with the newsletter mailing. She also offered to create an informational box relating to phosphorous being recently deemed as illegal. Ms. Gillespie will provide a box for the Go Green Festival. Mr. Berg will do a recap of the last hunting season and Ms. Sesto may want to add an article about the Norwalk River Valley Trail.

Town-wide Clean Up Day Update – Mr. Conklin confirmed the date is set for April 6th. He is working with Mr. Simone on the recruitment of volunteers. Ms. Gillespie expects a confirmation from Pinocchio on free pizza slices for volunteers very shortly. Mr. Conklin will produce a press release two weeks prior to the event. He is considering ordering two dumpsters as some years the collection has netted more than one dumpster full. Mr. Berg suggested contacting a Wilton Student group, “Bottled Up”, through the Wilton Education Foundation for assistance. Ms. Begor encouraged cleaning up Wilton every day of the year, and not just on this designated clean up day.

Dan Berg Chairman Position – Ms. Begor confirmed that Mr. Berg showed interest in becoming the Chairperson of this Commission and she is happy to let someone else take the position.

Mr. Simone MOVED to APPOINT Mr. Berg as Chairman of the Conservation Commission, SECONDED by Ms. Merrill and CARRIED 6-0-0.

Community Redevelopment & Conservation Act (CRCA) – Ms. Gillespie handed out materials relating to the legislative initiative and asked the commission to reconsider the position of forgoing this option for Wilton. She stated that CACIWC is in favor of the legislation and has been urged by Dave Bingham to sign the Commission up in favor of this optional tax.

A discussion ensued about who would be responsible for the payment of the tax, if it is requested. The information that has been received has been very vague and would most likely benefit Land Trusts, and not Conservation Commissions. The commission reiterated this is not something that the commission should sign at this time.

VII. LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Gillespie confirmed that no conservation related items were heard at either Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands Meetings so she has nothing to report.

Mr. Berg is the liaison for April.

Ms. DiLoreto asked if someone could cover the April 25th Inland Wetlands

Meeting as she will be away. Ms. Gillespie agreed to handle this meeting on her behalf.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 2/6/13 –

Mr. Simone MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes as drafted, SECONDED by Mr. Berg, and CARRIED 6-o-o.

IX. ADJOURN – Ms. Begor MOVED to adjourn at 9:35pm, SECONDED by Mr. Berg, and CARRIED 6-o-o.

Next meeting will be April 3, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin
Secretary, Environmental Affairs

DRAFT