

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

May 7, 2014 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL - MEETING ROOM "A"

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

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

Absent: Dan Berg (notified of intended absence)

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Ms. Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
- II. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- III. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None
- IV. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks Reports – Mr. Conklin confirmed that he is installing the new park signs this month. He also confirmed that he, Ms. Merrill, and Dave Francefort are meeting within the next week to discuss the relocation of the Quarry Head Trail as Dave is an expert on sustainable trail design and a valuable volunteer.

Mr. Conklin also stated that he is hiring Lars Cherichetti, a local arborist, to assist with pruning in the Horseshoe Pond park area. Mr. Simone noted that the lily pads are blooming in the pond. Mr. Conklin stated that Anne Deware has raised about \$4,000 of the required \$5,000 for the first year's herbicide application.

Mr. Conklin encouraged all commissioners to walk their parks now that the weather has improved. He asked everyone to let him know if any parks need attention. He stated that the bridge on the red trail at Cherry Lane Park is in need of replacement. Ms. Merrill noted that there is also bridge repair work to be done at Sackett Preserve. There was also discussion about installing arrows at the fork at Sackett so that park goers know which way to go.

Ms. Brown shared an experience that she had in Cherry Lane Park where a woman refused to leash her pit bull even after she identified herself as a Conservation Commissioner. Mr. Conklin explained the law in Wilton that dogs must be under control of their owners, and not necessarily leashed. The commission discussed putting signs up in all parks requesting that dogs be leashed at all times. The issue of cleaning up after dogs was discussed and the thought was to add a sentence on the leash sign to curb dogs.

- B. Conservation Activity Log Updates** – The commission discussed updates to the working log. The Quarry Head Trail Consolidation team will meet next week as previously noted. Mr. Conklin is in the process of creating a plot plan for Ms. Merrill so that she can work on the Horseshoe Pond long-term management plan. Ms. Algon confirmed that she will email volunteers to confirm the timing for coverage of the Conservation Commission Table at the Tree Festival on May 17th. Ms. Brown stated that she has not been able to connect with Mr. Berg about the Facebook page but hopes to start something soon.

The commission discussed beginning some community park walks in conjunction with the Garden Club, much like last summer. Most of the walks were under attended and the commission discussed having one in September and one in October when most families are back from summer vacations. Ms. Algon offered to liaise with the Garden Club to get the program started.

Ms. Algon and Ms. Brown stated that feedback from the Go Green Festival was that the commission does not communicate events properly. Mr. Conklin confirmed that we have press releases and signs throughout town, as well as communication with all Wilton Churches and Schools. They also stated that event attendees really enjoyed the large map with the parks included. Mr. Conklin noted that we can provide a large map for each park.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto stated that the Tree Steward Award was presented to Alice Levin at the Go Green Festival. She will also receive this award at the upcoming Tree Festival.

Ms. DiLoreto stated that Paul Young has retired from the CT Tree Warden Board of Directors but will remain as the town's tree warden. The recently donated trees are being planted this Spring with the exception of Kristen Begor's tree which will be planted in the fall. Mr. Conklin asked Ms. Larkin to look into this with the Tree Committee Chairperson, Kate Throckmorton, for budget planning purposes.

Ms. DiLoreto also confirmed that some tree clearing was completed near Trackside and that the area will be planted with the “right tree, right place” standards. She indicated there is a new statute that she will email to all commissioners. This statute confirms the tree owner responsibility for owned trees that fall onto the neighbor’s property.

- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill confirmed that the total number of deer harvested last season in Wilton was 164. The committee continues assess the program from last year to move forward with this year’s hunt with lessons learned. Ms. Merrill indicated that the homeowner surveys were 60% favorable for the program. The committee is happy with the results of their efforts so a plan is being made to schedule another program for the 2014 hunting season.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill reported that Wilton Land Trust is waiting for a grant to come through for invasive removal in Harrison Smith Preserve and Spencer-Rice Preserve.

Ms. Merrill also reported that the Woods Forum that was held in Weston was a success.

D. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership (FCRCP) – Ms. Merrill reported that this group has written their strategic action plan which will be presented in the Fall to all Conservation Commissioners in the county.

Ms. Merrill also confirmed that FCRCP in partnership with Westchester Land Trust applied for and was awarded with a US Forest Service Grant. This was the only grant from the USFS given within the State of CT for 2014. Ms. Merrill announced that she has accepted a position to coordinate this Hudson to Housatonic project on a 2-year contract beginning in September of this year.

- ii. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Ms. Larkin reported that the ribbon cutting event on April 26th was well attended. Ms. Algon stated that she walked the trail and was concerned about the amount of invasives. A discussion ensued about the losing battle of invasives due to not having a long-term management plan and the budget to support it. It was noted that a newsletter article for the fall may be appropriate focusing on stilt grass as this is a

fall invasive and will be timely. Ms. Merrill offered to write the article and Ms. Algon will talk to the Garden Club about this issue.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Town-Wide Clean Up Meeting Report – Mr. Conklin confirmed that he was invited to a meeting with several residents, the First Selectman, the Police Chief and the Director of Parks & Recreation to discuss some new ideas on the issue of litter in Wilton. The ideas discussed were additional litter receptacles, a litter ordinance, and fines via new signage. The commission agreed that town-wide clean up can only be held once a year, but that all residents are encouraged to pick up litter anytime.

VI. LIAISON REPORT

April 2014 - Ms. DiLoreto confirmed she did not have any meetings to attend in April as there was nothing conservation related.

Ms. Merrill is the liaison for May.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 4/2/14 –

Mr. Simone MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes as drafted, SECONDED by Ms. Algon, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

VIII. ADJOURN – Ms. Diloreto MOVED to adjourn at 9:00pm, SECONDED by Ms. Brown, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

Next meeting will be June 4, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin
Secretary, Environmental Affairs