

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

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**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES**

WEDNESDAY July 7, 2010 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

Present: Dave Hapke, Patrice Gillespie, Nick Lee, Jeff Coppelman, Kim Young,

Also Present: Patricia Sesto and Recording Secretary Jennifer Russell.

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Ms. Young called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

- II. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS –
 - A. **WET 1971(S) – LITTLEFIELD** - construction of new pool and patio located within 100 feet of a water course at 131 Spoonwood Road.

Ms. Sesto described the location of the property and the proposal to construct a pool within lawned areas.

The property owners had a permit to build an addition over the existing driveway area a few years ago. The mitigation plan at that time included construction of a wall to delineate the new limit of lawn and plantings below the wall and adjacent to the pond. Mr. Hapke remarked that the pool would be reducing the amount of lawn and pointed out the pros and cons of this. He also inquired about draining the pool. Ms. Sesto explained that the pool water is neutralized so that it is not intended to be a risk to the environment. The commission offered no objections or suggestions.

 - B. **WET 1973(S) – SOUND MANAGEMENT GROUP** - “corrective action“ to rectify construction and landscape work in and adjacent to wetlands at 21 Trails End Road.

Ms. Sesto displayed map of this property, pointing out the property to be discussed. The owners did work on the property without obtaining permits. Ms. Sesto informed the commission that the changes on the property include: constructing a dog kennel, filling adjacent to the pond, removal of vegetation, reconstruction of bridges, and the construction of a patio and pergola. This work was done in concert with other activities on the adjoining property, 3 Trails End Road, that the Goudis’ recently acquired.

The proposal is to remove the dog house, retain the deck and pergola, and install plantings around the pond and west of the pergola.

The dam, which was also rebuilt without permits, will be addressed under a separate permit.

- C. WET 1974(S) – SOUND MANAGEMENT GROUP *** – construction of a tennis court and “corrective action” to rectify construction and landscape work in buffers at 3 Trails End Road.

Ms. Sesto pointed to this property on the map and spoke about the changes that have been executed without a permit, namely clearing of invasive plants, piping a section of an intermittent stream, removal of 30 ± trees and partial removal of a retaining wall

The current proposal and mitigation plan includes the following activity: the construction of tennis court with house, unearthing a section of the water course, addition of plantings along dog house, relocation of the dog house to garage location (formerly known as 3 Trails End), and planting along the wetland to the north. A driveway will also be added to connect 21 Trails End to the former 3 Trails End.

The commission asked several questions regarding the two properties. Ms. Sesto guided the commission to assess the aspects of the plan that are relevant to the wetlands and watercourses. The pervious nature of the tennis court and new driveway were questioned, with Ms. Sesto stating that the driveway is proposed to be pervious and she was unsure about the tennis court. There is no proposal to remove fill around the pond. It was noted that new stone has been added to the pond banks and the 3 Trails End house was removed without permits.

Ms. Gillespie expressed her concern that the owner and property manager do not appreciate the importance of land conservation and preservation of natural surroundings. Mr. Lee pointed out that based on his experience with this property, this is an area prone to flooding and the fill will greatly effect of the properties downstream. He expressed a concern that the property changes will exacerbate the damage caused by high flows. Ms. Gillespie expressed concern about the lighting disturbing the bird population. Ms. Sesto mentioned a potential problem with insects and fish in the pond as a result of the lighting as well.

It was the consensus of the commissioners to issue a memo to the Inland Wetlands Commission recommending the fill from around the pond be removed to restore previously flow patterns, the dog house be relocated to a place further from open water, question the ongoing work such as removal of the house and filling the pond banks with stone without a permit, and urge more restrictive use of outdoor lighting.

- D. WET 1975(S) – MUTUAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION – “Wilton Commons”** - construction of affordable housing development with associated work within regulated area at 21

Station Road.

Ms. Sesto clarified that there was not a site inspection of this property today. Ms. Sesto explained that the original permit for construction was in 2005 though no comments related to this application were found. She clarified that this permit is for 50+ units and reconfiguration of the site plans to downsize the previously approved development.

The commission had no new comments or recommendations.

- E. WET 1977 (S) – TEACHERS INSURANCE AND ANNUITY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA –** addition of surface parking spaces, some of which are within regulated buffers at 10 Westport Road.

Mr. Hapke was recused from this discussion.

Ms. Sesto located the property on the map and pointed out the location of the proposed parking spaces. She explained that the permit includes the construction of three lots to increase surface parking spaces. Ms. Sesto said that there are raspberry bushes, black locust and ash trees in the wooded area for the lot with 63 spaces. The other two lots will impact upland hardwood forest.

Commissioners discussed alternatives and it was suggested that the lot with 94 spaces be “stacked”, reducing the footprint by approximately one half. This would minimize the footprint on the woodlands. She stated that the current plan is a deviation from the previous approach to managing property on the site where parking is provided under buildings or on their roof. She mentioned that the catch basin discharge from the two smaller lots flows to a vortech unit before the stormwater flows to infiltrators. The system is sized to treat the first inch of rain. The larger parking area is proposed to discharge to a level spreader in the wooded area then to the wetlands area some 70 feet away. She stated that this system is less effective than infiltration.

Mr. Lee inquired whether the property owners would consider the construction of elevated or “stacked,” parking. Ms. Sesto supposed that they would have to consider cost of the proposed plan. Mr. Lee explained that the stacked parking would reduce storm water by half.

She pointed out that the proposal seemed to strive to limit the area of impact. The planting plan is aggressive and includes: 19 red maples, 5 sugar maples, 10 oaks, about 35 understory trees, 24 Norway Spruces & white pines, about 300 shrubs. She explained the owners will

plant many more trees than the regulations require. These would meet the Planning and Zoning requirements. She added that trees will remain in center of the property. Ms. Young pointed out that stacked parking would save many more trees. Ms. Gillespie asked if we could request paved or pervious parking spaces as opposed to asphalt. Ms. Sesto answered that this was a worthwhile request. She stated that perhaps the parking area could be built in the grass field instead of the woodland area, if zoning requirements permit it.

It was the consensus of the commission to have staff draft a memo suggesting the largest parking lot be converted to a stacked configuration and pervious surfaces should be incorporated. The applicant should be recognized for its robust planting plan and the feasibility of using the grassy area north of the access road be investigated.

III. PLANNING and ZONING REFFERALS –

A.SP 258D - MUTUAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION - construction of affordable housing development at 21 Station Road (Wilton Commons).

No comments were offered.

B.SP191 I - TEACHERS INSURANCE AND ANNUITY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA – addition of surface parking spaces at 10 Westport Road.

The Commission offered the suggestion of stacked parking in order to reduce land consumption.

IV. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks –

Ms. Sesto explained that Jim Root, son of building Inspector Bob Root, accomplished a great deal of work in the parks. She reported that the large well vaults on the Sackett property will be filled in within the month.

B. Recycling – Begor/Hapke –

Mr. Hapke spoke about the recycling efforts. He said that trees have been cut at the Transfer Station in order to re-direct the traffic flow. He shared the concept of charging residents by weight of trash, as surrounding towns operate (Ridgefield, Westport and Weston). Mr. Hapke expressed the intention to increase the focus on recycling. He spoke of a concept for residents to bring trash to the Transfer Station in official garbage bags. While

this has been done successfully in towns with a single hauler, there is no precedent in towns with multiple haulers. This would require DPW to buy and distribute the bags.

Mr. Hapke said that he and Ms. Dennis, CFO, would prefer a debit card system for residents. Mr. Hapke would prefer debit cards, without the use of tickets or special bags. Ms. Sesto inquired whether the new “house” and tree removal at the Transfer Station was within 100 feet of the wetland. Mr. Hapke reported that Mr. Thurkettle said it was not.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

1. Tree Committee – Mr. Lee explained that there should be an emergency plan in place in case of a significant storm, such as the one that devastated southern Fairfield County this past spring. A plan needs to designate a place for tree debris. Mr. Lee also expressed concern about an insect outbreak, such as the beetle outbreak in Massachusetts.

Three out of the six benches were donated. Frank Mabley’s tree was planted. Six crab apple trees will be planted on the town land in front of Village Market. Ms. Sesto suggested that a resident could donate a tree to replace the Spruce that recently fell in front of the Wilton Library. Mr. Hapke inquired about watering trees that were planted, including along Route 7. Ms. Sesto stated Mike Conklin has been watering the trees planted in the center; D.O.T. watered the trees their trees the first year. Some of these are in their first year of growth, Mr. Hapke added. Mr. Lee reported that the vast majority of DOT’s trees are doing well. Ms. Gillespie questioned whether D.O.T. should be reminded to water due to recent lack of rain. Ms. Sesto agreed with this suggestion.

2. Energy Committee – Ms. Young spoke about the possible ways of including young people in the topic of energy conservation. She suggested a device that measures energy usage when plugged into an outlet.

3. Go Green Committee – Ms. Gillespie explained that the Go Green Committee will become a separate entity and seek 501(c)3 designation. They will complement, rather than duplicate, work of the Energy Committee. Donna Pratt, a member of Planning and Zoning Commission, is no longer the Chair of the Committee. Richard Creeth and Paula Birdy will serve as the new co-chairs for the time being. There will be a public meeting within the next few months in order to determine the mission.

D. Regional Projects

1. FFD Co. Municipal Deer Management Alliance - Ms. Sesto reported that a study determined Wilton residents spend \$6 million for deer management, landscape management, and tick management annually. The study did not address long term costs of Lyme Disease treatment. The study can be used to support sharp shooting in order to manage deer population.

2. Norwalk River Valley Trail – A grant will be submitted to National Park Service by August 1st for Rails, Trails, and Conservation Assistance. It is not a financial grant, but rather

a technical grant. This grant could provide assistance with facilitating public meetings among other things. The grant will be awarded in October or November.

The Recreational Trails Grant has yet to be awarded because the Federal Highway Administration has not release money to DEP. They are waiting for DEP to fulfill some requirements of pervious awards.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Fall Newsletter – Ms. Sesto reminded the Commission that the Fall Newsletter will be distributed in early October. Ms. Gillespie spoke about a Department of Energy grant to be awarded to Wilton over the next 2-3 years for \$200,000 for the “Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge.” She explained that this is a competitive program to entice 10% of the town population to reduce energy consumption by 20% (or 20% of the population to reduce energy by 10%). Wilton, Westport, Weston and Ridgefield are the competing towns.

Mr. Lee suggested including a picture of the Asian long-horned beetle that is invading Massachusetts. This article ran last spring, but the recent discovery of the ALB in Boston is worthy of an update.

Ms. Young suggested that an outline for Open Space be included in the newsletter with a note to contact Ms. Sesto if interested. Ms. Gillespie requested that the 2009 hunting schedule be updated on the website and Ms. Sesto stated she would explore this situation.

Mr. Lee suggested tracking improvements in Merwin Meadows. Ms. Young also suggested the topic of a coyote study. Additionally, she suggested an article in the newsletter regarding the fall migration of birds and the danger of collision with windows in buildings lit at night.

Liaison Report – Retirement home at Allen’s Meadows will construct sidewalks and easier access to the perimeter of the property, but it will not affect wetlands. A new building will also be added.

The commission discussed the lights at the Lake Club tennis courts at night. Mr. Hapke shared that the neighbors are not in favor of the lights. The lights are a conservation issue.

Fairfield County Woodlands Regional Partnership - Ms. Gillespie wanted to include in the newsletter a request for someone to attend a Regional Conservation Organization as a representative of Wilton. Ms. Gillespie pointed out that Wilton was not represented at these meetings. She said the partnership’s goal is for more forest coverage (up to 70%). She added

that the forest coverage would be 90% privately owned and 10% permanently protected. Mr. Lee added that this is a reasonable goal since it is already at 60% coverage. The partnership may be able to assist with a tree ordinance.

VI. LIAISON REPORT

VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Sesto shared that she was the CT representative to the Interstate Environmental Commission for NJ, NY and CT. The commission will most likely not continue due to lack of funding. The Commission conducted water testing tasks.

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

IX. ADJOURN – Mr. Lee moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Hapke seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Next meeting will be September 1, 2010.