

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES**

December 5, 2012 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

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

Also Present: Patricia Sesto, Director, Environmental Affairs, Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst, Liz Larkin, Recording Secretary

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Ms. Begor called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
- II. Mr. Simone MOVED to ADD the Election of Officers to the agenda, SECONDED by Mr. Berg and CARRIED 5-0-0.

Ms. Begor noted that she has been the chair for several years and she is willing to let someone else take the role to gain a fresh perspective.

Ms. Merrill joined the meeting.

Ms. Begor stated that Ms. Young was the previous secretary and her term has ended. The commission agreed to table the elections until later in the meeting once everyone has had some time to think about who should be nominated.

- III. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS
 - A. **WET#2147(S) Ciganik – 74 Cheese Spring Road** – “corrective action” to rectify work done in an upland review area

Ms. Sesto noted that this application is for a corrective action and does not affect this commission. Ms. Begor confirmed that the Inland Wetlands Commission will handle this application with everyone’s best interest in mind.

- IV. PLANNING and ZONING REFFERALS - None

- V. ONGOING BUSINESS

- A. **Encroachment of Spencer Rice Preserve**

Ms. Sesto reminded the commission that the property owner of 10 Gaylord Drive, Mr. Gedney, had built a shed on conservation land owned by the town. The commission had previously determined that Mr. Gedney should be required to remove the shed and associated gravel, remove the brush, demarcate the boundary, and replant the restored area. Ms. Sesto reported that all required work was completed satisfactorily except for the boulder demarcation and shrub plantings. Mr. Gedney indicated he would add the boulders but he is asking for relief on planting the shrubs as there are no other shrubs in this area. He proposed covering the area with leaf matter for a more natural look.

Mr. Merrill asked about invasives in the area. Ms. Sesto noted that the area is very bare and there are currently no invasives. Mr. Berg asked where the shrub requirement originated. Ms. Sesto responded that mitigation is standard operating procedure for corrective actions, but may not apply in this case.

The commission agreed the homeowner may forgo the planting of the bushes, as the boulders and leaf matter will suffice. Ms. Sesto confirmed with Mr. Gedney that he should call her when this activity is completed so that she may inspect the area and close out the violation.

B. Parks

Ms. Begor reminded the commissioners to walk their parks, especially after significant weather events, and report any findings to Mike Conklin.

Mr. Conklin reported that he recently hiked most of the parks to assess storm damage from Storm Sandy. His assessments will allow FEMA to review the damages to our open spaces in hope of receiving up to 75% reimbursement on these expenses. He is completing this task with technology that allows him to take pictures on his iPhone which are geo-tagged and easily placed on a document that can be provided to FEMA.

Mr. Conklin noted that Cherry Lane Park and Bradley Park have the most extensive damages. Town Forest was affected, but the Trail Ambassador, Dave Francefort, went in after the storm with a group of people that cleaned up the trails for public passage.

A discussion ensued about volunteer groups throughout the town that hold informal clean-up events at local parks and open space. It was determined that these groups most likely live in the neighborhoods they clean. Dave Francefort, Dave Cody, and Chris K. were mentioned as champions as they have successfully drawn on residents to help with the Town Forest and

Bradley Park. The commission may ask for their assistance in getting residents involved and excited in other open spaces.

Ms. Begor confirmed that the entrance to Vista Park, which is over Land Trust property, was almost completely blocked from the blow downs during the storm.

Mr. Simone stated that he did not enter Belknap since there is hunting ongoing. He was able to walk the Grassi property and there were some trees across the trails, but they are passable.

Ms. Gillespie noted that brush/leaves has been accumulating along the road on Raymond Lane on the Spencer/Rice property. Mr. Conklin noted that he can send a letter to the property owners to attempt to dissuade them and their landscapers from blowing leaves/brush on the property.

A discussion ensued about a public outreach program for park goers to establish a working group for Quarry Head and Cherry Lane parks. Ms. DiLoreto suggested that the program be named, and a letter to the editor be submitted to get the word out. Ms. Sesto stated that Ridgefield has similar groups dubbed “park rangers”. She also stated that Terri Goodwin pays for the maintenance at Quarry Head by Jim Sweet, and Anne Deware stewards Horseshoe Pond. Ms. Begor suggested an article should be written on these individuals in the spring 2013 Conservation Newsletter.

Ms. Gillespie asked if there could be a group that removes invasive species from parks in the spring. Ms. Sesto confirmed the commission can call on Scouts and Kiwanis for these types of events. Mr. Conklin pointed out that it is important to understand how the removal should take place as it is more than pulling the plants out of the ground and can take several years of following up to make a true difference. Ms. Merrill reported that she attended the Annual CACIWC meeting last month where they talked about invasive removals. Ms. DiLoreto stated that she went to a trail blazing conference and will send all materials from that day to Ms. Larkin for uploading to the town’s website.

B. Work with other Commissions/Committees

Tree/Bench Committee –

Ms. DiLoreto reported that Kate Throckmorton is doing a great job as the chair since Jessica Kaplan’s departure over the summer. The last of the America the Beautiful Grant is being completed. She described a current pilot program where the town is asking individual property owners in the center of

town to help with the maintenance of the trees that were donated. There are still spaces for donated trees and benches if anyone is inclined.

Deer Committee –

Ms. Sesto reported that the state is currently in muzzle-loader season. She does not think the town will reach the goal of 300 harvested deer as we only have about 87 from archery season. She confirmed that Redding has a program running where certain areas are holding a controlled hunt, one area is reserved for sharp shooting, and one area for just tick management. Once the season is completed, the town will perform a study that shows which method had the best success rate for tick reduction.

The commission discussed that Westport is the only town in Connecticut that has a ban on all hunting. Westport and Redding have used an infrared study to count the deer.

Energy Committee –

Ms. Gillespie reported that she recently attended a DEEP conference for regional municipalities. She described a new state initiative that was discussed, called the C-PACE Program (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Program). This program allows building owners to install site-specific clean energy generating systems without upfront costs. The costs of materials and labor are financed over 20 years by the town through a state-vetted program, and are paid off by an affordable increase to (and with) normal property taxes. Another benefit is that these costs are transferrable if the property changes owners before the installation is fully paid for. The Energy Commission will, along with the Town's new Economic Development Committee, encourage our local commercial sector to take advantage of this new incentive program while helping to green the state's energy resourcing and increasing the intrinsic value of the participating properties.

Go Green Committee –

Ms. Begor confirmed that the Go Green Festival will take place in the spring. She stated that the committee recently received an award for the best environmental task force, called the Green Coast Award.

D. Regional Projects

1. FFD Co. Deer Management Alliance

Ms. Sesto stated she has nothing new to report.

2. Norwalk River Valley Trail

Ms. Sesto reported that the Norwalk River Valley Trail is working towards an implementation strategy. They are requesting a recommitment of their members to ensure they have a good working group. She stated that they are meeting with DOT next week who has already offered their approval, with a notice that this trail is not their priority. She added that they have established 2 donors for funding opportunities.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

2013 Meeting Schedule – All commissioners received a copy of the 2013 meeting schedule and agreed the first Wednesday of each month is still a good time for everyone.

Ms. Gillespie MOVED to APPROVE the 2013 Meeting Schedule, as drafted, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto, and CARRIED 6-0-0.

Schencks Island Clean Up Letter – All commissioners received a copy of a letter from a resident requesting that Schencks Island have an organized monthly clean-up. Ms. Sesto noted that she responded with a letter thanking this resident for their appreciation of the park, while noting a formal monthly clean-up would not be feasible. All park goers are welcome to bring gloves and garbage bags and pick up litter that they find in their travels.

Fall Newsletter Feedback – Ms. Begor noted that she has received very positive feedback from the latest newsletter. Nancy Faesy was very touched by the article Ms. Gillespie wrote for the front cover.

Wilton Land Trust Reporting – Ms. Begor asked Ms. Merrill, who is active with the Land Trust, to provide monthly updates on what the Land Trust is doing. The commission will attempt to create a working relationship with the Land Trust as we have the same goals.

Community Redevelopment & Conservation Act (CRCA) – Ms. Sesto noted that everyone received a copy of the CRCA handout and asked if anyone on the commission was interested in pursuing this initiative. Ms. Begor asked if the town would hold a vote on adding this type of a program. Ms. Sesto stated she would obtain more information that can be reviewed by the commission to determine if this is a worthwhile program.

Staff Transition – Ms. Begor noted that Mike Conklin will be taking over the monthly Conservation Commission meetings and welcomed him to the group.

VII. LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Begor reported on the October Inland Wetlands meeting she attended. She stated that Kennedy Application for a subdivision at 66 Warncke Road has been approved and a draft resolution is being generated.

Mr. Berg reported that he was not able to attend the November meetings.

Mr. Simone is the liaison for December. He stated that he would not be able to attend the December 13th Inland Wetlands Meeting. Mr. Berg offered to cover this meeting.

Ms. Begor requested that Ms. Larkin generate the liaison schedule for 2013 for distribution.

VIII. ELECTIONS

Ms. Begor was nominated to continue the Chair position. Ms. Merrill was nominated for Secretary.

Mr. Simone MOVED to appoint Ms. Begor for another term, and Ms. Merrill for Secretary, SECONDED by Mr. Berg and CARRIED 6-0-0.

IX. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 10/3/12 –

Ms. Merrill MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes as drafted, SECONDED by Ms. Begor, and CARRIED 6-0-0.

X. ADJOURN – Ms. Begor MOVED to adjourn at 9:10pm, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto, and CARRIED 6-0-0.

Next meeting will be January 2, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Larkin
Secretary, Environmental Affairs