

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

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WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY October 1, 2014 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

MINUTES

- I. PRESENT: Dan Berg (Chair), Donna Merrill, Susan DiLoreto, Frank Simone, and Jackie Algon
- II. ALSO PRESENT: Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst; Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs
- III. ABSENT: Jill Brown (notified of intended absence)
- IV. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Berg called the meeting to order at 7:31pm.
- V. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- VI. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None
- VII. ONGOING BUSINESS
 - A. **Parks Reports** – Mr. Conklin confirmed that Sackett and Belknap will be mowed within the next two weeks. He also noted that the work being done in Quarry Head was postponed due to rain.

Mr. Conklin stated the he and Ms. Merrill met with Terry Goodwin to review the strategic action plan they created over the summer. He confirmed she was very receptive of the work that is being proposed and provided funding for the proposed landscape work. The commission discussed how having an action plan with realistic goals and timeframes would be good for each of the parks. Ms. Merrill stated she would email the action plan to all commissioners to use as a template for other properties.

Mr. Conklin reported that he and Pat Sesto walked the Black Farm to get a feel for the property after receiving feedback that it is not inviting. He confirmed that the town has an easement to walk the mowed trails which change often making it impossible to create a trail map. The commission discussed that there were some issues with vandalism and this is why the signage at the access point is strongly worded. He and Pat will work with Sophie Black to revise the wording to make it more appealing to visitors. The aged kiosk will be updated as well.

The commission discussed the differences in easements and Mr. Berg noted that conversations with the property owners should be ongoing to ensure compliance. Mr. Conklin invited commissioners to be in contact with their respective open space owners. Mr. Berg stated there should be something written about all parks that can be saved in a binder for future commissioners.

B. Conservation Activity Log Updates

Ms. Merrill noted that she has made significant progress at Quarry Head as previously discussed. She then confirmed that she can spend more time concentrating on the Horseshoe Pond management plan now that Quarry Head is in progress. Ms. DiLoreto confirmed that she would like to be added as another secondary for this initiative.

Mr. Berg confirmed that he met with Ms. Brown and the Facebook page is active. He would like to post information about the Household Hazardous Waste Collection and get other Wilton Facebook groups to join.

Ms. Algon stated that she is working to schedule the Park Walks with the Conservation Committee of the Wilton Garden Club. She had written an article for the upcoming newsletter which states that walks will take place at 1pm the third Sunday of each month, from October through December. She indicated she booked Dean Keister, of Trout Unlimited, to lead the first walk on October 19th at Schencks Island. Dan Berg indicated he can lead the November walk on the 23rd at Town Forest which falls outside of the third Sunday but will work just the same. The commission discussed the issues with a December walk so close to the holidays and inclement weather. It was decided that the December walk will be postponed until the springtime.

Ms. Algon confirmed that she is working to get funds for speakers at a springtime Invasive Plant Workshop. She noted that Donna Ellis would be a good speaker but would need to get paid. Mr. Conklin confirmed that Ms. Sesto is providing free services to Donna Ellis at the University of Connecticut on October 7th. Ms. Algon stated she will try to get the “No Pesticide Group” in New Canaan, and an invasives elimination group from Pound Ridge to attend. The commission agreed that publicizing this event will be the key to success.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto reported that there will be an article in next week’s paper asking for more donations for trees in the Center. She also confirmed they are closely watching the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer as it is now confirmed in 38 towns in Connecticut. Mr. Simone stated he has been watching his ash but does not know what to look for. Ms. Algon responded he should be looking for the exit holes. She then advised of a kind of ground wasp that kills this genus of beetles and that these can be found at the High School baseball field.

- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill confirmed that the hunting season is underway. Ms. Algon indicated that Alice Levin and she submitted a letter to the Wilton Bulletin in support of the hunt. The article will educate readers about the deer enclosure at Quarry Head. Ms. Merrill explained the purpose of the enclosure is to experiment with land to see what grows when deer are not able to eat the plants and shrubs.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated there was a meeting last week to discuss a newly aligned accessway connecting the Keiser Preserve’s open space trail and a 7-acre WLCT parcel abutting the Keiser Preserve which would provide a more direct link between the Gregg Preserve and the future Norwalk River Valley Trail.

D. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill indicated that she attended a meeting last week where the Strategic Action Plan was narrowed to six possible actions. She confirmed they intend to convene Conservation Commissioners across all of Fairfield County.
- ii. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Mr. Conklin confirmed that the new section of the trail will officially open on October 18th and 10:00am. The event will be more low-key than the last opening without prizes and raffles.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Fall Newsletter Update – Ms. Larkin confirmed that the newsletter articles were received and they will be sent to the graphic designer shortly. The newsletters will be mailed around October 16th.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection – Mr. Conklin confirmed the event was shortened this year to end at 1pm. He stated that he has changed the mailer that goes out to all residents to indicate that paint will not be accepted. He explained the contract that exists with the other towns in the region where they still accept paint and stated that we would be required to collect paint from those residents that attend.

A discussion ensued relating to how the group will manage Wilton residents that want to drop their paint and stains. Mr. Conklin stated that the residents need to be educated on the cost component and most will comply once they understand why this change has taken place. He confirmed that a flier will be handed out to each vehicle that explains the Paint Care program. In addition, the information will be in the Newsletter, and information will be sent to the press. He suggested any Wilton resident that has paint in the car go straight to one of the collection locations. He will notify the three PaintCare locations in advance of the potential for drop-offs that day.

All present commissioners confirmed they would arrive to volunteer for the event at 8:30am at Miller-Driscoll School.

Wilton Trails Association Donation – Mr. Conklin stated that the Wilton Trails Association disbanded in 1996 and donated their remaining funds of \$5,867 to the Conservation Commission specifically to assist with equestrian trail maintenance. He

asked the commissioners if they would allow the Norwalk River Valley Trail to use these funds for the next portion of the trail. The commission asked if there are any other parks that need attention for equestrians. Mr. Conklin confirmed Town Forest is frequently used by equestrians but does not require any additional maintenance. Ms. Merrill stated that Quarry Head is used as well.

Ms. Algon MOVED to APPROVE the use of these unused funds for the Norwalk River Valley Trail, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto and CARRIED 5-0-0.

IX. LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Berg confirmed that he did not need to attend any meetings in September as there was nothing conservation related. Ms. Algon is the liaison for October.

X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 9/3/14

Ms. Merrill MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes as amended, SECONDED by Ms. Algon, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

XI. ADJOURN – Mr. Simone MOVED to adjourn at 9:05pm, SECONDED by Mr. Berg, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

Next meeting will be November 5, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs