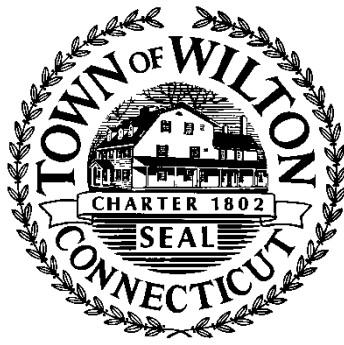


CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY November 4, 2015 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

MINUTES

- I. PRESENT: Dan Berg, Chair, Donna Merrill, Jackie Algon, Frank Simone
- II. ALSO PRESENT: Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst; Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs
- III. ABSENT: Susan DiLoreto (notified of intended absence)
- IV. CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Berg called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.
- V. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- VI. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None
- VII. ONGOING BUSINESS
 - A. **Parks Reports** – Ms. Merrill indicated the scout working at Quarry Head has completed his project of installing native plantings, including markers to identify the plants for educational purposes. Mr. Berg confirmed he lead the walk at Quarry Head on October 18th. Ms. Merrill stated she noticed a large tree came down across the trail at Quarry Head in the farthest reaches by the brook. Ms. Algon confirmed her partner Karl walked the trails earlier in the day and all trees were cleared. Ms. Merrill added that this particular tree has taken down a portion of a fence on one of the neighboring properties.

Ms. Merrill stated the restoration of the dam at Quarry Head has picked up steam as the neighbors have committed to fund the project. She confirmed Mr. Conklin is working with CT DEEP to obtain permission to repair the dam. Mr. Conklin stated he is waiting for a state dam inspector to complete a site visit and provide guidance. Mr. Conklin stated that Rick Parisot is ready to complete the work for a cost of \$25,000. Ms. Algon asked how deep the water will be once the dam is repaired. Mr. Conklin responded that nobody knows that depth yet but that it was about 12 – 18 inches in the recent past. Ms. Algon asked if there was a liability issue with this standing water. Mr. Conklin stated there is no town liability as it is state-owned land.

Mr. Conklin confirmed a giant tree fell on the orange trail at Town Forest, right onto a bridge that he and Dave Francefort built a year ago. He stated Charlie Robinson was hired to remove the tree and he was thankful that the crew was able to save the bridge when they removed the tree. He added that Charlie Robinson only charged \$100 for this removal, which is practically donating this work.

Mr. Conklin shared an experience walking Bradley Park earlier in the day. He met two separate residents walking their dogs who are looking to volunteer at the park. He noted that he had also met a resident that had just been followed by some coyotes recently so there may be a den nearby.

Ms. Merrill stated she spoke with Mr. Kaelin, the new member of the Board of Selectman, who is very interested in working to improve Schenck's Island as he called it a "gem".

Mr. Conklin confirmed that Sackett and Belknap Preserves have been recently mowed. He indicated he was not thrilled with the mowing done at Sackett and is considering purchasing a machine that the town could use to mow when we wish. A discussion ensued relating to the mowers and man-power from Parks and Recreation. Mr. Conklin stated that their equipment could sink in the soft terrain so a brush mower, attached to the front of a bobcat, would be required. Ms. Algon asked how many times these parks should be mowed annually. Mr. Conklin responded that three times would be ideal, but once a year at a minimum.

Mr. Conklin stated he had a successful work day with Dorel Sports recently at Horseshoe Pond. He confirmed five volunteers attended and they were able to rebuild the dilapidated bench and open up a window by cutting brush to be able to see the pond when you pull onto Horseshoe Road from Wolfpit. Mr. Conklin reminded the commission that he is looking for more shovel ready projects like this one for when volunteers call.

B. Conservation Activity Log Updates

Quarry Head Trail Consolidation – Ms. Merrill had nothing additional to report.

Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan – Ms. Merrill had nothing to report.

Park Walks – Ms. Algon stated there are no walks scheduled yet for November and December. The commissioners determined the date of the November walk will be the 22nd and that Bradley may be a good choice. Mr. Conklin suggested sending a personal invitation to the owners at the new River Ridge Toll Brothers Complex. Although Ms. DiLoreto was not at the meeting, the commissioners hoped that she would be able to lead this walk. Mr. Conklin stated he would reach out to the Homeowners Association of River Ridge as we are hoping to garner support for the park by these neighbors.

Ms. Algon suggested that Cherry Lane Park be chosen for the December walk on December 20th. It was suggested that the commission label this walk as a chance to get some fresh air just prior to the hectic Holiday week. Ms. Algon confirmed that she is working with Jeanette Ross of the Wilton Bulletin to publicize these walks.

Ms. Algon stated that Patrick Sweeney will be doing a talk at the Library on November 19th. He will be speaking about the herbarium which the Conservation Commission will sponsor.

Ms. Algon reminded the commission that the movie night at Gilbert & Bennett is this coming Sunday at 2pm. The movie is called "Symphony of the Soil" being paid being sponsored by the Norwalk River Watershed and the Wilton Garden Club. She added that popcorn, cider and donuts will be served.

Mr. Conklin asked commissioners to ask their friends and co-workers to pull together volunteer groups to complete park projects. He noted that if each commissioner was able to get a team together for a couple hours, every other week, a lot could be accomplished. An example of this is the brush at the front of Sackett Preserve which could be cut back in a few hours.

Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan – Ms. Merrill reported that she is working on the planting plan, which will take place in stages by area.

Carry In/ Carry Out Initiative – Mr. Berg stated there is nothing new to report. Ms. Merrill suggested utilizing the same signage that was recently installed in Quarry Head.

GIS Trail Maps for Walkers Guide – Mr. Berg stated there was nothing new to report.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto was not in attendance.
- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill stated the committee did not meet in October. Mr. Conklin confirmed the hunt is ongoing.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated the Land Trust is considering a formation of a steering committee.

D. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill reported that Patrice Gillespie, a former commissioner, attended the most recent meeting. The group is working to have collaborative relationships with all 23 towns for open space. The goal is to obtain high value land that is contiguous.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Household Hazardous Waste Day Report – Mr. Conklin stated the final numbers have not been tallied but the event was a success. He was pleased that the message is getting out that paint and organic land materials are not hazardous and not accepted. He confirmed he would clean up the handouts relating to batteries and CFL light bulbs. He explained the billing process where cars are counted as either half or full households. He noted that a bag of batteries would be considered a half household and the town will be

billed \$19.50 for that, when they can be thrown in the regular garbage at home for no cost.

Mr. Simone stated that he is very impressed with Mr. Conklin's diligence to save the town money. He confirmed he drafted a letter to support his candidacy for the open Director position. All commissioners agreed that they would sign this letter prior submitting to the Human Resources Department.

Healthy Yard Initiative – Ms. Algon stated that she attended a talk with the Pesticide Free New Canaan Group and she would like to start a movement of not using pesticides in Wilton. Mr. Conklin stated that the town uses pesticides, and this commission agreed to use pesticides on Horseshoe Pond. He suggested making the initiative geared towards responsible land care. Ms. Algon confirmed she knows members of the Garden Club that use pesticides as well.

2016 Meeting Schedule – Ms. Larkin created the 2016 Meeting Schedule for review which continues to hold meetings on the first Wednesday of each month, except for August when there is no meeting.

Mr. Berg MOVED to APPROVE the 2016 Meeting Schedule, SECONDED by Mr. Simone, and CARRIED 4-0-0.

2016 Elections – Mr. Simone MOVED to keep Mr. Berg as the Chairman and Ms. Merrill as Vice Chair, SECONDED by Ms. Algon and CARRIED 4-0-0.

IX. LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Algon was the liaison for October and reported there were no conservation related applications, so he did not attend any meetings.

Ms. DiLoreto is the liaison for the month of November.

XI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 10/7/15

Ms. Algon MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes as revised, SECONDED by Ms. Merrill, and CARRIED 4-0-0.

XII. CT Urban Forest Conference – Mr. Conklin stated he recently attended the CT Urban Forest Conference. He noted that he learned about timber harvesting which is a 20-year cycle. He confirmed the money made with this process is put back into maintaining the property and this can make open space sustainable.

XIII. ADJOURN – Mr. Simone MOVED to adjourn at 9:07pm, SECONDED by Ms. Algon, and CARRIED 4-0-0.

Next meeting will be December 2, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs