

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY April 1, 2015 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

MINUTES

- I. PRESENT: Dan Berg (Chair), Donna Merrill, Jackie Algon, Susan DiLoreto, Frank Simone
- II. ALSO PRESENT: Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst; Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs
- III. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Berg called the meeting to order at 7:35pm.
- IV. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- V. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None
- VI. ONGOING BUSINESS
 - A. **Parks Reports** – Ms. DiLoreto reported that there is garbage overflow at Schenck’s Island and asked the commission for ideas on how to alleviate this situation. The commission discussed starting a “carry in, carry out” campaign for all town properties. There is also an issue with dog walkers not properly disposing of waste. Mr. Conklin confirmed this has been a rough winter and stated the garbage is picked up once per week in the summer but the Parks & Recreation Department has been inundated with other jobs during this long winter season. He then confirmed the field is mowed regularly and would speak with Doug Katz of Parks & Recreation about the garbage and waste issue. There are currently three garbage receptacles at Schenck’s but as they overflow, it was discussed either larger receptacles or having them emptied on a more frequent basis. Ms. DiLoreto offered to write an article in the paper about the issues to raise awareness and gain support. She also provided Mr. Conklin with information about a dead piece of cedar that may need to be professionally removed from Schenck’s near the Land Trust property. Mr. Conklin confirmed he is hiring Joe Cass for a day in the coming months to remove dead and storm damaged trees in all the parks. Anyone that has a park that needs attention were urged to let Mike know either by report, or using geo-tagging through their iPhones so that it can be included in Joe’s working day. There was also discussion about the commission meeting with the new River Ridge owners to garner their interest in stewarding Bradley Park just off their driveway.

B. Conservation Activity Log Updates

Park Walks with the Garden Club – Ms. Algon stated that the recent walk of Black’s Farm with Lars Cherichetti was well attended with 25 – 30 people of all ages; even on a very cold day. The next walk is scheduled for April 19th at Merwin Meadows with Dean Keister and a walk of Bradley Park is scheduled for May 17th led by Ms. DiLoreto.

Lecture Series with the Garden Club – Ms. Algon confirmed the invasives workshop at the library was well attended with about 30 people. She stated attendees seemed to enjoy the presentation and the speaker provided literature/handouts. Ms. Algon mentioned that there were some issues with the library closing schedule but they were able to push through. The next talk is scheduled for May 19th with Michael Dietz who will be speaking about Low Impact Development.

Mr. Conklin thanked Ms. Algon and all commissioners for all of their hard work and dedication. He noted that this group has made huge strides for this commission in their actions. He provided some ideas to ensure the public is aware of all of the work the commissioners are putting into these events. He suggested there be a sign-in sheet for each event so that the commission can quantify results which could help with reporting and funding in the future. He also suggested that events are videotaped so there is a permanent record of the events. He shared his experience with the library as they were not open to helping with the videotaping. Mr. Conklin asked if events can take place in the Old Town Hall at no charge as the Garden Club co-sponsors the event. Ms. Algon confirmed she would find out the details. Ms. DiLoreto stated she would speak with Elaine at the library to discuss options there as well as she is involved with the library. Mr. Conklin noted that the department is hiring a professional photographer to take still pictures at events. Ms. Algon stated that some people may not want to have their pictures taken. Mr. Simone suggested a disclosure notice on the sign-in sheets.

Mr. Conklin noted that Trout Unlimited is holding a Youth Fly Fishing Event at Merwin Meadows event on May 9th. This event includes DEEP stocking the river and Trout Unlimited volunteers teaching kids how to fly fish. Trout Unlimited provides free equipment and lunch for attendees. Last year 150 came to this event and it was reported that each attendee successfully caught a fish.

Quarry Head Trail Consolidation - Ms. Merrill confirmed she will work with Mr. Conklin to set up a walk of Quarry Head with Dave Francefort, a local volunteer trail expert.

Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan – Ms. Merrill confirmed she, Ms. DiLoreto, and Ms. Algon have held two meetings to discuss an action plan. They have included Anne Deware in these meetings as she has been a champion of the pond by raising money for lily control.

The action items on the draft include walking the property with Jeff Stahl to investigate brush around the pond, then a subsequent walk with Mr. Conklin to assess Mr. Stahl’s recommendations. Ms. Merrill confirmed once the boards are placed back in the pond in the spring that the committee suggests the pond be stocked with blue gills, minnows and

tadpoles. Ms. Merrill confirmed enough money has been raised for the second year lily application but there is still one more year to go. The action plan will include ongoing funding for maintenance. Other action items that Ms. Merrill stated in their draft include connectivity with Bradley Park and Schenck's Island, invasives removal, habitat restoration, improving site lines and access points along with trash collection and signage.

Mr. Conklin noted that he, Ms. Sesto and Josh Ryan from Timber & Stone, the professional trail builder contracted by NRVT, visited the area between the pond and Wolfpit Road for the upcoming trail creation. Ms. DiLoreto asked if Mr. Ryan will be careful not to disturb the habitat. Mr. Conklin confirmed there will be a balance. Ms. Merrill added that the neighbors should be involved in planting natives in the area.

Ms. DiLoreto suggested building platforms or docks that can be used as an educational tool. Mr. Conklin confirmed he would speak to Parks & Recreation about what they have done in Merwin Meadows as a guide. Ms. Algon stated large stepping stones may be an idea that would cost less and provide a more permanent viewing area as wood boards eventually rot.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto confirmed the Tree Committee is attending the Go Green Festival and the Norwalk Tree Festival. In addition, they are holding an event on Arbor Day where a Tree Steward will be awarded and new donated trees will be planted. She also stated there is a significant tree list that is being created for the Town of Wilton.
- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill confirmed 62 deer were harvested which is an improvement from the 53 taken last year. She stated that the three town parks that were added to the controlled hunt were not great locations as there was a lot of foot traffic during the off-season. These parks are Bradley, Cherry Lane, and Wild Duck. Bradley and Cherry Lane will not be on the 2015 hunt list. Hunters had mild success at Wild Duck and it will likely be on the list for 2015. Mr. Berg asked if State land could be hunted. Ms. Merrill will check into that and report back.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated there was nothing new to report.

D. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill stated that the Strategic Action Plan now has leadership with the Chairs of Ridgefield and Trumbull Conservation Commissions. She indicated there was an intern working with Highstead that completed a map of the 23 towns in Fairfield County of protected land. She hopes to get a copy of the Wilton portion for this commissions review. She added that there will be a land owner forum and a stewardship forum that land owners are invited to attend.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- i. Clean Up Day Results – Mr. Conklin confirmed that there was a slow start to the event but more people came after the initial kick-off. He stated 3,140 lbs. of debris was collected in the dumpster. He provided the commissioners with his draft report to the Board of Selectmen for review and comments.

Mr. Conklin stated that Bill Brennan had suggested that another clean up day be planned to get more people involved in the betterment of the town and asked commissioners if they would plan another clean up day in the near future.

Mr. Simone stated that he thought the group from Saturday did a great job and picked up just as much debris as twice the amount of people have picked up and under the cold weather and snow circumstances, this event was a huge success. He was concerned about the amount of time that goes into planning this type of event and thinks residents should have the opportunity to clean the town any day they so desire. Mr. Conklin confirmed that he would provide garbage bags and work gloves to anyone that wanted them at any time.

Ms. DiLoreto shared an idea to put a sign at the Conservation table at Go Green which would encourage residents to sign up and clean an area of their choosing while picking up the free garbage bags and gloves. This program may be publicized to gain interest.

Park Information on Conservation Website – Mr. Berg stated that he went to a park recently and was surprised at the simplistic maps on our website. He asked if we can update those maps and suggested adding QR Codes and more modern amenities for the Walkers Guide and Park entrance kiosks. Mr. Conklin confirmed that the Walkers Guide is currently under revision and he can look into replacing the kiosk maps.

- iii. Go Green – Ms. Algon, Ms. DiLoreto, and Ms. Merrill confirmed they would each take a shift at the Go Green Conservation table on May 3rd.

VIII. LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Simone confirmed there is nothing to report as there were no conservation related items in the month of February. Mr. Berg stated the same for March. Ms. DiLoreto is the April liaison.

X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 2/4/15

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

XI. ADJOURN – Ms. Merrill MOVED to adjourn at 9:22pm, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

Next meeting will be May 6, 2015.

Respectfully submitted, Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs