

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY April 6, 2016 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

MINUTES

- I. PRESENT: Dan Berg, Chair, Donna Merrill, Jackie Algon, Frank Simone, Susan DiLoreto, Jade Hobson
- II. ALSO PRESENT: Mike Conklin, Director of Environmental Affairs; Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs
- III. CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Berg called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm.
- IV. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS
 - A. **WET#2382(S) ASML – 77 Danbury Road** – construction of a 3-story employee parking garage 90 ft. from a wetland and repaving existing parking area 4 ft. from a wetland

Mr. Berg, Ms. Merrill, Ms. DiLoreto, Mr. Simone and Ms. Hobson attended the site walk of this property directly before the meeting.

Mr. Conklin displayed the site plan and described where the garage is being proposed. He indicated the applicant is requesting permission to cut into the existing hillside to build the garage.

Mr. Conklin noted that the stormwater drainage is complicated with heavy engineering so the Inland Wetlands Commission has requested a third party consultant to provide expertise on this application. Mr. Berg noted that the parking garage area is already paved. Ms. Hobson asked if the commission can request permeable pavement in areas that are not the actual garage structure.

- B. **WET#2384(S) TOWN OF WILTON – Schenck's Island** – town park improvements and invasive plant species control

All commissioners visited the site prior to the meeting. Mr. Conklin displayed the plans and explained that the First Selectman and residents have asked that invasive plant species be removed and native plantings be installed. Mr. Conklin explained that special cultivars were selected in the planting plan to be specific to our climate and the site.

Ms. Algon raised concern that the 18 River Birch noted in one area would create a monoculture which she stated is ill advised. She added that these trees are planted in

groups of multi-stems and it is too many trees in one area. Ms. Algon noted these trees also shed a lot and only have a small canopy. Ms. DiLoreto agreed that there needs to be enough space for the trees to grow and there are too many on the plan, even in this good damp location. Mr. Conklin stated they may add an additional Sycamore that is currently not on the plan. He also confirmed the mulch for the new trees being installed will be chips from the trees being removed such as Ash and Hickory. A discussion ensued relating to the size of trees to be planted. Mr. Conklin stated the proposed River Birch is approximately 5 ft. and grows about 2 ft. per year. Mr. Conklin added that he has gained permission from the DEEP to water the newly planted material with water from the Norwalk River.

Mr. Conklin confirmed there are proposed clearing openings on the plan. The intent is that people can view the river and Schenck's Island when they drive or walk through the center. The commissioners were hesitant to have lawn up to the river and Mr. Conklin stated that the Town does not use fertilizers in this area. Ms. DiLoreto was concerned about erosion and runoff from the river bank. Ms. Merrill stated that she has a template for a riparian buffer which would be more ornamental and aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Conklin confirmed the arborist is helping to ensure the shade is properly maintained on the river.

Ms. DiLoreto asked if the town was going to erect a sign during construction giving details about how the restoration project will take three years to complete. This will alert residents and visitors that it may not look pristine at any given time during the initial installations. Mr. Conklin confirmed a sign could be installed prior to any activity taking place.

Mr. Conklin stated he is working with Jeff Yates of Trout Unlimited (TU) to ensure the proposal is in line with the health of the river. He also noted that there will be an application proposed by TU to the Inland Wetlands Commission later this spring for a redesign of the stream channel with boulders and rocks and a possible handicap ramp to allow visitors to get right to the edge of the river for enjoyment and recreational purposes.

Ms. DiLoreto stated that there should be narrower ground cover at the window locations likes sedges and rush to clean stormwater prior to flowing into the river. She concurred that the trees proposed for removal are not worth saving. She also noted that the tree sizes should be larger in size at 15 gallons. Mr. Merrill asked if any of the nearby stores are willing to donate for this project. Mr. Conklin did not know of any businesses that have expressed interest, but this will likely be addressed.

V. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None

VI. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks Reports – Ms. DiLoreto reported that Bradley Park has many trees that are hanging over. Mr. Conklin noted that he is meeting with Joe Cass from Chip-Away Tree Service to review and get an estimate of many areas in town where trees are hanging.

Ms. Hobson stated that Spencer-Rice has trees down. Mr. Conklin confirmed that only when trees are hanging or are dangerous to the public are removed. He noted the trees she is speaking of will help with animal habitat. Ms. Hobson also noted that the blazes are not clear at this park. Mr. Conklin explained how she can re-blaze the loop trail and he would provide the materials.

B. Conservation Activity Log Updates

Quarry Head Trail Consolidation – Ms. Merrill confirmed Dave Francefort has flagged the new trail so that no part of the trail will be on the fall line. She indicated the crosses on the fall line take into account the best virtues like views of the natural park features. She stated this may be a fall project as he and his volunteer crew is busy all spring and winter. Mr. Francefort will need 18 volunteers to assist him with the project.

Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan – Ms. Merrill stated she is waiting for the quote from Chip-Away, but they have a base plan in place. The commission discussed the planting of Black Eyed Susans near the two stop signs which would be about 1,200 plants. Ms. Merrill and Ms. Hobson confirmed they have Black Eyed Susans to donate.

Mr. Conklin asked that nothing take place prior to getting the estimate from Chip-Away. He confirmed that a wetland permit will be required for the cutting, planting and removal of invasives adjacent to the pond. He added that any trees that will be removed need to be posted by the Tree Warden, Paul Young, for 10 days prior.

Park Walks/Talks – Ms. Algon noted that the walk for this past Sunday was postponed due to snow and ice and is rescheduled for this Sunday, April 10th. The walk will be at Merwin Meadows at 1pm lead by Dave Havens, amphibian expert. Ms. Algon asked Mr. Berg to post this update on the Facebook page.

Ms. Algon confirmed the next walk is scheduled for April 24th from 10am to 12pm with Joe Bear with the Audubon Society. The walk will take place behind the community gardens which the commission noted is a major thoroughfare for migration.

The commission discussed the next walk for May. It was decided that a Friday night moonlight walk at Quarry Head would be a good option. Mr. Conklin suggested contacting the Yale Astronomy Center to obtain an expert to lead the walk.

Ms. Algon suggested a butterfly walk in June with Victor DiMassi. Mr. Conklin noted that Schenck's Island is filled with butterflies in August so this may work as well.

Ms. Algon noted that there are no talks scheduled at this time.

Carry In/Carry Out Initiative – No update.

GIS Trail Maps for Walkers Guide – No update.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto reported the committee is holding a booth at the Go Green Festival. She also mentioned that the Arbor Day Celebration is being held on April 29th at 5pm and all are invited to attend.

Ms. DiLoreto confirmed that the town is removing ash trees to minimize the potential spread of the Emerald Ash Borer.

- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill stated there was nothing to report.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated there was a meeting held with the town to get a new contract in place for the maintenance of Schenck’s Island as the previous contract expired.

D. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill reported that the Hudson 2 Housatonic (H2H) is taking precedent over the FCRCP as people are engaged in a larger landscape of Open Space. She added that grants will be easier to access through H2H.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Appointment of Jackie Algon to Tree Committee – Mr. Conklin noted that the commission will need to appoint Ms. Algon to the Tree Committee as she will be the representative from the Garden Club.

Mr. Berg MOVED to APPOINT Ms. Algon to the Tree Committee, SECONDED by Ms. Hobson and CARRIED 6-0-0.

B. Townwide Cleanup Day Update – T-Shirts? – Mr. Conklin stated that the planning is well underway with the assistance of Ms. Larkin. He inquired if the commission would consider buying and providing t-shirts for volunteers that arrive at the event. The commission agreed that this expense is not warranted and most volunteers will wear jackets that would cover up a shirt during the cleanup.

C. Conservation Newsletter – Mr. Conklin confirmed that the new Director of Earthplace, Sarah Crosby, wrote an article to educate residents about the active scientific study that takes place to ensure water quality in Wilton.

Ms. Merrill suggested adding a “Backyard Pledge” initiative as an option for residents where they can go on a website and pledge to do simple things on their property with little effort that will improve the environment. She stated she would send the details to the commission via email. Ms. Merrill noted that we can possibly put this on the Facebook page.

D. Press Releases – Mr. Conklin stated that any time four or more commissioners meet, it will need to be publicly noticed at least 24 hours in advance. He noted that any press releases or correspondence should come from his office on official letterhead.

VIII. LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Berg confirmed he attended an Inland Wetlands Meeting in March where a Public Hearing was held for a new home construction at 54 Warncke Road. Mr. Simone confirmed he attended the first hearing in February for this new home and pool. Mr. Simone also heard two other applications for Seir Hill Road and Stonecrop.

Ms. DiLoreto is also the liaison for the month of April. Ms. Larkin confirmed that the ASML hearing opens on April 14, 2016 so this will be a meeting she should attend.

XI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 2/3/16 Meeting & 2/28/16 Vista Road Park Walk

Ms. Algon MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes of February 3rd, SECONDED by Mr. Simone, and CARRIED 6-0-0.

Mr. Berg MOVED to APPROVE the Vista Walk Minutes from February 28, 2016, SECONDED by Ms. Merrill and CARRIED 6-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS – Ms. DiLoreto asked if there are parameters that the commission can adopt as our policy. She would like to encourage the town to be more proactive in being good stewards of the land. Mr. Conklin and Ms. Larkin agreed to look at historical information so that the commission can review the vision and mission statements. Mr. Simone stated that a mission statement may be adopted but the commission is bound to the Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning Regulations. Ms. Merrill stated that CACIWC has good resources for this purpose. Mr. Conklin added that the Town Code may help as well.

XII. ADJOURN – Ms. Algon MOVED to adjourn at 9:38pm, SECONDED by Ms. Hobson, and CARRIED 6-0-0.

Next meeting will be May 4, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs