

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**WEDNESDAY September 2, 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; Patricia Sesto, President, Norwalk River Valley Trail; Richard Kent, President Rotary Club
- III. CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Berg called the meeting to order at 7:40 pm.
- IV. Review of the Norwalk River Valley Trail at Horseshoe Pond Park

Mr. Berg MOVED to ADD this item to the agenda, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

Mr. Berg noted that the trail proposal on the southern and western sides of the pond is okay with the commission. Ms. Sesto noted that she has invited Richard Kent, as the President of the Rotary Club, to discuss the recent changes at the Rotary's Adopt a Spot at the corner of Horseshoe Road and Wolfpit Road.

Mr. Kent confirmed the Rotary spent in excess of \$1,200 plus labor recently to install a planting area at this Adopt a Spot including a Rotary Sign. He indicated that he was surprised to find their sign was moved to make room for a large Welcome to Wilton sign without permission from the Rotary. In addition to this change, he is concerned about the Norwalk River Valley Trail now asking to move some of the plantings to make room for the trail right through this planting bed. He stated that he, on behalf of the Rotary, the Town of Wilton, and the NRVT should be able to come up with a mutually agreeable solution to make all these initiatives work. He stated there has been a lack of coordination in the past that he would like to address.

Ms. DiLoreto provided an initial sketch she created of the area in question. She confirmed once she realized Rotary was involved in this corner area, she absolutely invites Mr. Kent to get involved in the decision making of where the trail should go, especially since he is also involved with the NRVT.

Mr. Conklin asked the commission if there is any reason they see not to approve the trail coming through Horseshoe Park for conservation reasons. Mr. Simone stated that he would suggest the least amount of disturbance to the area. The commission discussed the different ways the trail could come through the eastern area from the road. The

route towards the existing parking area was thought to be a steep area at points and would not be ADA compatible. The route sticking closer to Wolfpit Road would be problematic with traffic being close and winter snow pileup. Mr. Conklin confirmed with Ms. Sesto that the Trail Builders will not disturb the stand of healthy trees at the southern end of the pond. Ms. Sesto stated that the trees will be protected. Ms. Sesto then noted that she would like to relocate the planting bed and have the trail come straight through that area.

Mr. Berg MOVED to support the construction of the Norwalk River Valley Trail in Horseshoe Park in a manner and location with the least environmental disturbance possible and with the flexibility necessary to resolve the layout and be respectful of Rotary's Adopt-A-Spot. The commission understands the Friends of the NRVT will work with the First Selectman's Office and the Rotary Club to come up with a final plan for the trail layout, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

#### V. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS

- A. WET#2341(S) LEVI – 135 Olmstead Hill Road** – remove existing septic system and install new system 86 ft. from wetlands and construct pool and spa partially within an upland review

Mr. Conklin displayed the plan and asked the commissioners if they had any concerns about the proposal. Ms. Merrill asked if the commission could recommend a planting plan that would be equal in size to the additional lawn they are creating to improve the quality of the buffer for the wetland. Mr. Conklin confirmed this will be noted on the memo to the Inland Wetlands Commission.

- B. WET#2344(S) EVERSOURCE – 658 Danbury Road** – remediation of environmentally impacted soils

Mr. Conklin explained that the sale and purchase of this property required a full inspection of the property for any contamination in the soil. As contamination was found, the current owners must clean this up prior to the sale.

Mr. Conklin confirmed the contamination was from old asphalt fill that has degraded over time and released chemicals into a defined area. The removal will be overseen by a licensed environmental professional and they are under direct report to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Mr. Conklin confirmed any vegetation that is removed with the contamination will be replanted.

Commissioners did not have any comments or concerns regarding this application.

#### VI. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None

#### VII. ONGOING BUSINESS

- A. Parks Reports** – Mr. Conklin confirmed he has a boy scout that would like to volunteer at Quarry Head. Mr. Conklin indicated there was a sink hole that formed on the property so he arranged for a contractor to drop and level leftover dirt from a residential project into this area for safety reasons. The Scout will most likely assist with spreading grass seed in this area around the beginning of October. Ms. Merrill and Mr. Conklin will meet with this Scout at the property to ascertain what other work could be done there.

Ms. Merrill noted that there is an area at the beginning of the newly paved driveway that was paid for by Terri Goodwin that has cracked and needs to be fixed. Mr. Conklin stated he would look at this and make adjustments as needed.

A discussion ensued relating to the “Promposal” last year where someone carved the word “prom?” into a tree at Quarry Head. Mr. Conklin suggested that he meet with the Principal and ask them to remind the students that they should have fun with the process, but to not deface town property.

- i. Schenck’s Island Discussion – Mr. Conklin explained that there was an agreement between the Wilton Land Conservation Trust and the Town of Wilton to clear the middle area of Schenck’s Island and maintain the area as a meadow. This contract was drafted in 2003 and was meant to be a means of agreement to pay a fixed amount each year for the maintenance of the meadow. The cost was approximately \$5,000 for the first year and the amount was reduced each year. Mr. Conklin explained that this agreement to pay for the maintenance has expired and we have nothing in writing requesting any payment for fiscal year 2015.

Mr. Conklin noted that the department received an invoice from the Land Trust at the end of the fiscal year requesting a \$6,000 payment for the year’s maintenance. As this was a surprise, he scheduled a meeting with Theresa Mucci, the Meadow Restoration Expert, and Bruce Beebe, the President of the Land Trust. Per Mr. Conklin, this meeting did not go very well. He was explaining the cost restraints to Ms. Mucci and she was not amenable to listen to any budgetary restraints. Luckily, the department was able to put some other projects on hold and was able to pay the entire \$6,000 to the Land Trust as we want to keep a good relationship with them.

Mr. Conklin asked how the Commission would like to proceed with this agreement and payment in the future. The commission agreed that a contract would need to be in place with estimates, so that we do not have any more surprises. Ms. Algon stated that our small budget should be split between all of our parks. Mr. Conklin added that he would prefer to be pro-active about spending money in the parks rather than be re-active which is not only a poor way to conduct business, but typically costs more money.

Mr. Conklin noted that there is other work besides the meadow that needs attention at Schenck’s Island Park. He was told by Lars Cherichetti, the Town’s Deputy Tree Warden, that the ash trees along the river will need to be removed. In addition, there is gravel needed for the parking area, the fence is in need of repair, and a split tree was already removed that was in danger of falling in the parking area. He asked that the commission keep these items in mind when making their decision.

Mr. Conklin stated that he recently met with Jeff Yates, of Trout Unlimited, who is interested in assisting with the work at Schenck’s Island to remove the ash trees, replant with shade trees, and create a stream enhancement with habitat

restoration. This partnership may be extended to the Norwalk River Watershed Association.

Mr. Berg confirmed there must be a limit to the Conservation Commission's financial commitment. Mr. Conklin offered to draft a letter of mutual commitment. The commissioners stated a contract should be in place prior to any further work being done by the Land Trust that this commission would be responsible for paying.

## **B. Conservation Activity Log Updates**

**Quarry Head Trail Consolidation** – Ms. Merrill noted that they are waiting to schedule time with Dave Francefort to look at the current trails.

**Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan** – Ms. Merrill stated the sub-committee will have something to present to the commission this fall.

**Park Walks** – Mr. Conklin stated he would like to have specialists lead walks, such as a bird walk. The commission noted the Woodcock Nature Center has an Owl Prowl walk at night that is fun and well attended.

Ms. Algon confirmed there is a walk scheduled at Sackett Preserve on September 27<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 being led by Ms. Merrill where she will concentrate on explaining meadows.

Ms. Algon stated that she is working with Go Green, the Wilton Library, and the Garden Club to schedule a talk in October regarding pesticides. She confirmed this talk will be based on science, but that the speaker for "Pesticide Free New Canaan" will be invited as well.

**Carry In/Carry Out Initiative** – Mr. Berg stated there was nothing new to report. Mr. Simone stated that he walked Schenck's Island recently and this park is a good model for the rest of the parks as the recently installed signs seem to be making a difference.

**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 stated that the Town of Easton is taking down ash trees for blight and the material should be used locally for fire wood.
- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill confirmed there was no August meeting but the hunt is moving forward smoothly.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated there was nothing new to report.

## **D. Regional Projects**

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill noted the group is currently looking at priority lands. Their GIS person is going to all 23 towns to confirm what is protected and prioritize these lands so that the group can pursue some major grant funding.

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS

**Fall Newsletter** – Mr. Conklin asked the commissioners for article ideas. He asked that drafts are provided to Ms. Larkin by October 1<sup>st</sup> for the newsletter to go out around October 15<sup>th</sup> prior to the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Date on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Algon stated an article should be written on the Emerald Ash Borer, and the Southern Ash Beetle. The commission discussed this topic and determined that an article had already recently been written on the Emerald Ash Borer. Ms. Merrill stated that she was given Alice Levin's folder of information that holds historical information of her work to collaborate the protecting of the stream. The commission agreed that this could be a very informative article. Ms. Merrill also explained that she saw a recent article about how the town of Oslo, Norway is creating a bee highway whereas residents are encouraged to plant pollinating plants that bees can visit every certain amount of meters apart, which is how bees naturally move.

**Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day** – Mr. Conklin confirmed that the collection date is October 31<sup>st</sup> and asked for volunteers for the day. Mr. Simone and Mr. Berg indicated they would be available.

## IX. LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Algon reported that she attended a meeting in July where the Lindquist application was discussed. Mr. Simone reported that he attended a Planning and Zoning Meeting where the turf field was discussed.

Mr. Berg is the liaison for September. He indicated that he is not available for the Wetlands meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Algon offered to cover this meeting.

## X. NEW BUSINESS

Commission Openings – Ms. Merrill asked what can be done with the two openings we have on the commission for almost one year. Mr. Conklin confirmed that the commission would need to contact the chair of the Democratic and Republican parties to get this accomplished. It was noted that the volunteerism in town has dropped and perhaps this would be a good topic for an article to post in the upcoming newsletter.

## XI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 7/7/15

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

## XII. ADJOURN – Ms. Algon MOVED to adjourn at 9:34pm, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

Next meeting will be October 7, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,  
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs