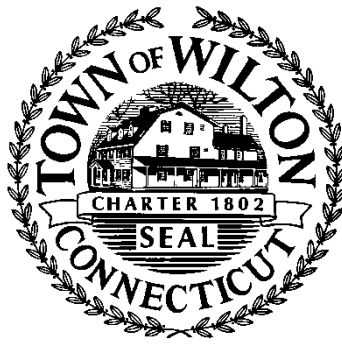


CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**WEDNESDAY September 3, 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 7:30pm.
- V. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- VI. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None
- VII. ONGOING BUSINESS
  - A. **Parks Reports** – Ms. Algon confirmed that she visited Wild Duck Reserve and there is a downed tree on the white trail. She indicated that she could not find the blue trail as depicted on the map. Ms. Algon also stated that she walked a portion of the Black Farm but noted that she was not comfortable there as there is an uninviting sign. Mr. Conklin stated that the owners had some issues on the property in the past and that the easement may only include the perimeter of the property. He stated he would check with Pat Sesto regarding the easement and mowing responsibilities.

Mr. Simone confirmed that he walked the Grassi property and it is well maintained by the Finks. His concerns include poor visibility of the entrance and no parking area. He also stated he walked Belknap but he could not find the blue trail. Mr. Conklin offered to walk the property with him to properly mark the trails. Mr. Simone indicated that the Cherry Lane entrance is in good shape.

Mr. Conklin stated he is obtaining quotes for fall field mowing at Sackett Preserve and Belknap Preserve. He indicated that Bear Paw Builders may be hired to complete this maintenance. Mr. Simone stated that Horseshoe Pond still has lily pads after the first year of treatment. Mr. Conklin confirmed that there are less lilies and that it is a 3-year process.

Ms. DiLoreto stated this would be a good newsletter article to explain the timeframe and progress to assure residents that the treatment initiative has not failed.

Ms. Algon stated that three trees are down in Quarry Head. Ms. Merrill indicated that she knows what trees she is speaking of and they are actually on the Wilton Conservation Land Trust property. She confirmed the land trust will be removing these shortly.

Mr. Conklin confirmed that there was a recent Eagle Scout project at Cherry Lane Park where a small boardwalk was built that traverses through a marshy area. The Scout also clipped back brush on the trails. Mr. Conklin reminded the commissioners that they should always bring clippers on their park walks and remove any branches that may brush up against people. He also stated it is important to look up and make note of any hanging trees that could be a possible falling hazard. Chip Away Tree Service will be hired to remove trees that present a hazard.

Mr. Conklin confirmed that he and Ms. Merrill have worked together over the summer to create a strategic action plan for Quarry Head State Park. He explained that Larry and Terry Goodwin have paid for the property maintenance since 1987 so he and Ms. Merrill will present the action plan to Terry for her approval prior to rolling this out. Ms. DiLoreto stated that every park should have a management plan. This will allow commissioners to update the parks with more modern issues, and to be better stewards of the properties.

Ms. Algon stated that she lives near Vista Road and she would like to take over responsibility of this park from Kristen Begor who is no longer on the commission. She stated that she cannot get into the space due to downed trees. Mr. Conklin stated that access is off Bald Hill Road.

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

Ms. Merrill confirmed that she has been re-thinking her original idea of creating a bird habitat in the section of Horseshoe Pond along Wolfpit that will be bisected by the Norwalk River Valley Trail. Instead, she would like to create a habitat for aquatic birds. She will still propose opening views and creating access to the water's edge at various points in the park. Mr. Conklin suggested contacting Ducks Unlimited as they can help with the planning and may provide grant money.

Mr. Berg confirmed that he and Ms. Brown met over the summer and created the Facebook page. They have not advertised yet as they are waiting until they feel it is ready with links back to the town website. Mr. Berg made it clear that this is not a forum for debates and any content that is unwanted will be removed. The purpose of the page is to publicize trail walks and events. Ms. Algon asked if pictures of invasives could be included and the commission agreed this would be a great tool for residents that may not understand the impacts of these plants.

Ms. Algon stated she was trying to get a walking tour of Schencks Island at the end of September with Dean Keister. After considering the need to advertise, this walk will need

to be pushed back until October. She stated she would like to arrange a walk in Bradley Park, also in October.

Ms. Algon stated that Sara Stein, who wrote Noah's Garden, would be a great speaker for the Invasives Workshop. She stated that she would try to get the workshop set for Spring 2015.

### **C. Work with other Commissions/Committees**

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto reported that the new bricks were installed at trees that were donated in the center.
- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill confirmed that the committee is gearing up for the hunting season which starts on September 15<sup>th</sup>. She indicated that Sackett Preserve and Town Forest will not be hunted this year. Bradley Park, Wild Duck and Cherry Lane are new properties added to the hunt this year so she needed to get approval from the commission to add these properties. Ms. Merrill explained that there will be a meeting for abutters to attend to ask questions and raise concerns. The start of hunting for these properties will be November 1<sup>st</sup> to allow time to communicate with the neighbors and to provide access during the warmer part of the fall to those who use these parks.

Ms. Merrill stated that Wrens Thicket and Charter Oak are small and do not have walking trails so these will be hunted for the entire bow season from September 15<sup>th</sup> through January 31<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Simone raised concern about Charter Oak, which is in his neighborhood. He asked about access, how the hunters work, what type of signage is displayed and what the liabilities are. Mr. Conklin stated he would show access to him on his GIS program after the meeting. He then explained how the hunters hunt in tree stands and the legality of tracking deer on a neighboring property. He added that signs are put up in advance of any hunting and he will check with Pat Sesto about Mr. Simone's concern of liability with the commission's approval. Ms. Merrill confirmed that Charter Oak, Wild Duck and Cherry Lane are bow only and there is no hunting Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and Sundays per state law. Mr. Conklin suggested adding information to the "Park Closed" signage to guide people to other parks that are open.

Ms. DiLoreto MOVED to APPROVE hunting at Bradley Park, Wild Duck and Cherry Lane, Wren Thicket and Charter Oak with the following conditions: "Hunting in Progress" signs be posted at the property entrances, letters will be mailed to abutters prior to hunting notifying them that the parks are closed and hunting will be in progress, hunters will be vetted, and notice will be published in the local newspaper to inform the public of the park closures and the hunt. This MOTION was SECONDED by Ms. Algon and CARRIED 5-0-0.

- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated there is nothing new to report.

#### **D. Regional Projects**

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill provided members with a condensed version of the Strategic Action Plan which relates to this commission. There are three goals that were discussed and the action items to complete these goals. All commissioners agreed that these are attainable goals which this commission will support. She indicated the next meeting is being held on September 25<sup>th</sup> at Highstead and all are invited to attend.
- ii. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Ms. Larkin confirmed that the new section of the trail will officially open on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

Fall Newsletter Articles – Commissioners asked that Ms. Larkin re-send the list of article assignments via email. A due date was set for September 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### **IX. LIAISON REPORT**

Mr. Berg confirmed that Ms. Brown sent an email noting that she did not have any meetings to attend in July so there is nothing to report. Mr. Berg is the liaison for September.

#### **X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 7/2/14**

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

#### **XI. ADJOURN – Ms. Algon MOVED to adjourn at 9:14pm, SECONDED by Mr. Berg, and CARRIED 5-0-0.**

Next meeting will be October 1, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,  
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs