

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

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WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 3, 2008 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

PRESENT: Commissioners: Dave Hapke, Nick Lee, Patrice Gillespie, Kate Throckmorton, Kim Young, Kristen Begor, Christopher Coyle

ALSO

PRESENT: Patricia Sesto, Director of Environmental Affairs, Leticia Ferguson, Bill Adamson, Nancy McDaniel

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hapke called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Kim Young introduced her guest, Bill Adamson from the American Chestnut Foundation.

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

Chairman Hapke nominated Kristen Begor as the chairman of the commission. Nick Lee seconded the nomination. It passed unanimously.

Chairman Hapke nominated Kim Young as secretary. Mr. Lee seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

Mr. Hapke stressed the importance of new ideas in the year to come. Chairman Begor chaired the meeting, which followed.

III. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS – None

IV. PLANNING and ZONING REFFERALS – None

IV. ONGOING BUSINESS

1. Old Post Office Square, 10 Center Street – easement encroachment

The plan was pared back to replacement of the elements that existed before the encroachment: removing fill and the fence and replacing plantings. The members recalled a brick patio in the original plan as opposed to the cement patio proposed. The surveyor supplied a letter to the Inland Wetlands Commission stating that the note on his plan was wrong. New dumpsters would be provided.

2. Parks - All

Mr. Hapke reported on his park, Quarry Head. The trails are clean. It will be necessary to re-mark the blazes next year and the kiosk map needs freshening.

There is a form that should be used to report on park visits. Mr. Hapke will use it to write up his report.

Ms. Young said her site is fine.

Ms. Sesto noted that a tree fell from the Town Forest and landed on private property. Parks and Rec chopped it up and removed it.

3. Plan of Conservation and Development – Throckmorton

Ms. Throckmorton reported that at the last meeting, the town telephone survey about what is important to residents was discussed. The group is fine-tuning the questions and is half-way through the process.

4. Center Tree Plan – Sesto, Lee, Throckmorton

Ms. Sesto reported that the committee had met officially and nominated a chairman, Jessica Kaplan. Two trees have been planted, one donated by Realty 7 and planted at the Library and one was planted at the American Legion Building in honor of Irving Chan, donated by Tom Harrington.

5. Recycling – Begor, Hapke

Mr. Hapke reported that he and Ms. Begor are members of an ad hoc town committee on recycling. The committee visited the recycling centers in New Canaan and Wilton. The Wilton operation will be redesigned to be more customer-friendly. Residents will be encouraged to recycle. There are site problems to be dealt with in the design process. The target completion date is July 2009, so that residents do not have to buy FY10 stickers in order to take recyclables to the transfer station.

6. River Walk – Lee, Coyle

Mr. Hapke said that he will serve instead of Mr. Lee. Mr. Coyle said that he had obtained the names of people who could help write grant requests. He and Mr. Hapke will work together on a formal plan of action.

Ms. Young said that a spokesperson is needed to inform property owners about the project and to address misunderstandings as they crop up. Ms. Begor noted that it would be useful to gather together all the owners that abut Norwalk River in the center and try to dispel any misunderstandings about the project.

7. Work with other Commissions/Committees

a. Parks and Rec./Allen's Meadows - Young

Ms. Young reported that she and Mr. Hapke had attended the selectmen's meeting to speak about Allen's Meadows. The selectmen were not in favor of spending the money that had been allotted. Parks and Rec wanted to focus on town, not state, land, but recognizing budget cuts, opposed spending funds on land development. The selectmen plan to discuss the matter further.

A path for the cross-country runners is needed. Bridges could be built by Eagle Scouts and town commissioners, staff, and coaches could collaborate to meet the more immediate needs. The large dirt pile at the north end of Allens Meadows is still there and additional material has been added. "no dumping signs were suggested Mr. Hapke suggested that all interested parties convene and form a plan to address these needs.

b. Energy Commission

Ms. Gillespie reported that the commission is considering joining a group of local governments dedicated to sustainability. They are working on a carbon footprint benchmark project. Software is available to organize the project and suggest tools to reduce the footprint. Other towns, including Westport have done the survey.

She asked if the commission would like to support the effort. Members were in favor of participating in the inventory. She will follow up with the organization by letter.

8. Regional Projects

a. Deer Management – Sesto

Ms. Sesto said that the Alliance is now 18 towns strong and moving ahead. Within to town's own controlled hunt, 50 deer have been taken this year, fewer by half than last year. Since there is less forest growth to forage on and a weak acorn crop, the deer spend their days grazing in yards. This reduces the efficacy of hunting . Ideally, 200 deer should be taken from town property each year.

There has been minimal resistance to hunting in the Town Forest from residents. Only hunting in the morning has been helpful in quelling usage concerns.

b. Water Quality & Quantity – Gillespie

Ms. Gillespie asked that the Harbor Watch/River Watch water report be posted on the town website. Ms. Sesto suggested said that a layman's summary would be more useful to the public. She has asked the author, Dick Harris to provide this.

Ms. Gillespie said Wilton should have a chemical-free land care program at the library. There will be a program on goose-egg oiling. Pond management should be emphasized.

Ms. Sesto said that staff member, Mike Conklin, was going to take on geese control as a project as part of his Master's degree program

Ms. Gillespie and Mr. Hapke attended the CACIWC meeting. She reported that the state of Long Island Sound water quality had improved.

9. Website - Gillespie

Ms. Gillespie suggested a story about the planting of American chestnut trees for the website. Mr. Adamson described the breeding program designed to create disease-resistant trees. They grow quickly and can bear fruit in five years. Some American chestnut trees can still be found in Connecticut.

Ms. Sesto read a letter from a resident who praised the website and the work of the commission. She said it was possible to add a button to the site that would allow people to email their comments. Members were in favor of the idea and thought the site should be advertised in the paper to expand awareness.

10. Donations – Nothing to report

14. Other – Nothing to report

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Endangered Lands Coalition Presentation – Leticia Ferguson

Ms. Ferguson of the Connecticut Fund for the Environment described the work of the Fund, which conducts studies on environmental issues and brings legal action when necessary. At present, they are backing a measure to require a 100-foot vegetative buffer on rivers.

She displayed maps of watersheds in Connecticut and explained the work of the Endangered Lands Coalition. The Fund supports protecting watersheds on private as well as water company lands. Legislation, if passed, would require careful review of proposed developments to ensure protection of water sources.

Clean air is also an issue. The Fund has completed a transportation study that identified pollution sources and will try to improve energy efficiency standards this year.

Ms. Ferguson asked that the commission work with the Fund by joining individually or by joining as a commission and receiving recognition as a partner.

Mr. Hapke asked members to study the handout packet, prepare to discuss at the next meeting and then perhaps decide to join the coalition.

2. 2009 Schedule

Ms. Sesto reviewed and finalized the liaison schedule with members. Mr. Coyle and Ms. Gillespie will serve as backups for those who cannot attend their meetings.

3. FY10 budget

Ms. Sesto reported that there are opportunities and necessities to save funds in the upcoming budget year. One is in hazardous waste disposal. The disposal of electronics will become largely the responsibility of manufacturers instead of the town. Wilton would collect the electronics, but the removal contractor would bill the manufacturer, not the town.

Another option would be to mount a campaign to instruct people to dry out latex paint and throw it away instead of bringing it to hazardous waste day. Latex paint is not hazardous, it has been collected over the years to facilitate waste reduction through recycling. Apparently, the recycled paint market is not strong enough and at least some of the material is being burned. There is no point in the town paying for this through hazardous waste collection. There will be confusion and some frustration on the part of the residents, so expanded efforts to minimize this are needed. Publicity on the website and in the press should be orchestrated.

With these savings, funds for grounds and maintenance and support of our regional initiatives can maintain their funding.

4. Other

VI. LIASON REPORT

Mr. Hapke reviewed the report that he distributed. Ms. Gillespie reviewed the handout from the CACIWC meeting.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mrs. Sesto had noting further to add.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 10/1/08, 11/5/08

On a motion by Mr. Hapke, seconded by Ms. Young approved 6-0-1, with Ms. Throckmorton abstaining, the minutes of 10/1/08 and 11/5/08 were approved.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Ms. Young, seconded by Mr. Lee and voted unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 9:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy McDaniel
Recording Secretary