

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY February 3, 2016 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

MINUTES

- I. PRESENT: Donna Merrill, Acting Chair, Jackie Algon, Frank Simone, Susan DiLoreto
- II. ALSO PRESENT: Mike Conklin, Director of Environmental Affairs; Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs
- III. ABSENT: Dan Berg (notified of intended absence)
- IV. CALL TO ORDER – Ms. Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.
- V. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS

A. WET#2372(S) COPPOLA – 54 Warncke Road – proposed single-family residence on vacant parcel including septic, pool, and stormwater management system

Mr. Conklin advised that this application is for a property that was recently subdivided. The plan has been substantially changed from the subdivision approval so it requires a wetlands review. He described the current proposal before the commission has the house and pool residential area encroaching into a current wooded area closer to the wetlands than the original subdivision request.

Mr. Conklin confirmed there is an old dug out concrete pool on the site that will be covered with wood decking to prevent falling injuries. They will also require some soil to be pulled from the area to level out the grade. He noted that they could pull the pool away from the woods as the extra clearing would not be recommended.

It was determined that the planting plan consists of mostly insignificant grasses and some are non-native. The commission recommends planting shrubs and trees to create more of an edge habitat. Ms. Algon asked if the existing structure in the wetlands could be removed. Mr. Conklin confirmed that the commission is not able to require removal of an existing structure. Ms. Merrill suggested reducing the size of the deck. Mr. Conklin confirmed there is permeability of the stormwater into the yard area.

B. WET#2376(S) BRANCH – 14 Stonecrop Lane – “corrective action” to address unauthorized tree removal and proposed alterations and additions to residence including replacement of a septic system.

Mr. Conklin explained that the property owners submitted an Intermediate Application for proposed additions on the home. When Mr. Conklin walked the property in preparation for the Wetlands Meeting, he discovered a violation as some trees were removed. The original application was subsequently withdrawn and a new corrective action Significant Application was submitted.

The owners removed about eight (8) trees approximately 24"-23" DBH and have proposed to remove five more substantial trees to make room for the septic. The current septic is a cess pool so the new system will be an improvement. The proposed mitigation includes eight understory trees and three pin oaks, as well as eleven shrubs. Ms. DiLoreto suggested that bigger trees should be required. She stated thirteen mature over-story trees will be removed so this amount should be replaced. Mr. Conklin stated that the sizes noted on the plan are typical, but they could increase the amount of replacement trees.

Mr. Conklin reviewed alternatives submitted with the application, but all still require the mitigation for the lost trees. Mr. Conklin stated with the slope, Beech, Oak, and Birch Trees would be desirable, and maybe one maple tree, with groups of five for species.

C. WET#2375(S) DATTILO – 135 Seir Hill Road – install gravity footing drain and extend earth fill adjacent to the house within a regulated area

Mr. Conklin explained when the new home construction was brought in for a feasibility review, there were portions in the regulated area. He worked with the developer to shift the activities to be outside the regulated area to avoid wetlands impacts and a wetland permit. He explained this proposed activity is to clear an upland buffer and bring in grading to place a footing drain right to the edge of the wetland. Mr. Conklin confirmed the footing drain is clean water which will drain into the wetland so there is no negative impact.

Mr. Simone asked if the drainage is sent to the neighboring property. Mr. Conklin responded that the drainage would stop right before the neighbor's property. Mr. Conklin confirmed there are infiltrators around the property to help with stormwater infiltration. Ms. DiLoreto noted there seems to be plenty of space to install the drain closer to the home without requiring any clearing. Ms. Merrill agreed the area should not be cleared and the owner should prevent, not minimize any encroachment into the 100 ft. regulated area. Ms. Algon noted there would be temporary disturbance with the digging of the trench. Mr. Conklin stated he would draft comments to encourage protection of the forest and wetland area.

VI. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None

VII. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks Reports – Ms. Merrill confirmed the sub-committee for Horseshoe Pond met in the Fall of 2015. Mr. DiLoreto and Ms. Merrill were able to take some measurements to locate existing features and start the planning process for how they would like to change the landscape of the pond edges.

Ms. DiLoreto confirmed there is a stone wall on the west side of the pond with 3 – 4 ft. of exposed ground with cover. A discussion ensued about the plant communities, invasives, and dead and disfigured trees. They are working to develop a rendered plan as to why it is

important to have habitat. Ms. DiLoreto stated they would suggest using a professional to install the plantings but they are aware of a limited budget.

Ms. DiLoreto noted this will be a long-term project that will exceed these commissioners terms. The main goal is to limit the removal of healthy trees, remove invasives and replant and create a low-maintenance established habitat. She mentioned a grant would be a good possibility for the cost of the work.

Ms. DiLoreto noted that Chip-Away was called for estimates as they have recently completed work for the commission at a very competitive cost. Mr. Simone asked how much the work will cost and suggested that businesses in the center, such as Stop & Shop may be willing to donate for this cause. Mr. Conklin suggested utilizing the Garden Club. Ms. DiLoreto noted she recently attended a workshop for blending plants for layers and habitat which she would like to follow for this project. Mr. Conklin suggested completing blocks of plantings which would allow the committee to obtain a key amount for donors. Ms. Merrill stated she knows Bill McKinney from Weston who would be an inexpensive option to implement the plan. Mr. Conklin confirmed the project would not start this Spring as there is not enough time to plan and raise funds. He suggested removing some dead and diseased trees this spring so that the area can be cleared in the fall to be ready for spring planting in 2017. Ms. DiLoreto did not want to remove too much this spring as invasives may grow in their place.

Ms. Algon expressed that she was pleased with the past spring removal as the areas stayed well cleared longer than expected. Mr. Conklin stated that there is grapevine and mugwort present at the stop sign. He suggested planting black-eyed susans in this area in the spring to build momentum on the entire project. Ms. Algon suggested utilizing a group that recently worked to improve Allens Meadows to help with that planting.

B. Conservation Activity Log Updates

Quarry Head Trail Consolidation – Ms. Merrill confirmed she met with Dave Francefort on January 22nd to walk the trails and discuss the consolidation. She noted the main issue is that the trails were originally built on the fall line. She stated Mr. Francefort has recommended breaking the project into three phases. The first phase is the entrance trail. This will entail 2 workdays with 60 man-hours. The second phase would be to correct the yellow trail which will entail 100 man-hours. The third phase will be to correct the south end of the meadow which goes into the Land Trust Property. The work can be done this spring or fall and it was suggested that the grown neighborhood children could lend a hand on a volunteer basis. Ms. Merrill also stated the dam project will be reactivated shortly as the State is due to get back to the town by February 11, 2016.

Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan – This item was discussed under Parks Reports.

Park Walks/Talks – The commission discussed a location for the February park walk which is scheduled for February 28th. The commission decided that Vista Lane would be good during the day, even if there is snow cover. The walk will begin at 1pm and we will direct

residents to park at the Bald Hill Road entrance with Ms. Algon leading the walk and Ms. Merrill covering the refreshments. The commission discussed setting up a gmail account for reservations. Mr. Conklin stated he would check with the Director of Information Technology on this possibility. Mr. Conklin also noted that Anne Brosco from the Wilton Library has offered the use of their telescope for the walks at night.

Carry In/Carry Out Initiative – No update as Mr. Berg was not in attendance.

GIS Trail Maps for Walkers Guide – No updates as Mr. Berg was not in attendance.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto reported the committee is looking into brick maintenance for the tree markers.
- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill stated there was no meeting as there was no quorum. The DEEP's harvest number for Wilton as of January 31st was 122. These numbers are low due to the warm weather and an excess of acorns.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated there is a meeting being held on February 18th.

D. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill reported that the GIS Map for the 23 towns in the county has been completed for this project. She confirmed they utilized WESCOG to penetrate town halls as they did not have success reaching the town's conservation commissioners. She will provide a presentation at the next meeting of the commission to show the board what they have accomplished.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Project Greenspace** – Ms. Merrill stated David Radcliffe is leading the advocacy for potential legislation which provides towns the option to enact a tax on real estate transactions for the purchase or stewardship of open space. She asked the commission if they support this enabling legislation. Ms. Algon stated that this was mentioned at a Garden Club Meeting and members were adamantly opposed. The commissioners did not make a motion to support this tax and suggested the First Selectmen handle the request.
- B. Conservation Newsletter** – Mr. Conklin asked commissioners to start thinking about possible articles for the Spring Newsletter. Ms. Merrill noted that she was still mortified about the Alice Levin article from the Fall version that was not the correct article. She would like to re-submit this article on a smaller scale. Mr. Conklin suggested an article on the Deer Hunt to re-educate the public as it has been some time since the initial project took off. Mr. Simone suggested an article on the recent park walks. Ms. Merrill mentioned healthy lawns and healthy kids as a suggestion.
- C. Townwide Clean Up Day** – The commission discussed the best Saturday to schedule

the 2016 Clean Up Day and April 23rd was eventually chosen as it will be warmer and too early for the poison ivy to come out.

D. Go Green Festival – Ms. Larkin stated the registration process for the Go Green Festival has been received and asked if the commission would like to participate this year. Ms. Algon stated she would be there with the Garden Club already. Ms. Merrill stated she would be there with the Deer Committee and possibly with Ms. Deware for the Horseshoe Pond Initiative.

After much discussion, the commission decided not to participate this year due to having many events in the springtime.

IX. LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Simone stated he attended a Planning & Zoning Meeting which included a hearing on the 183 Ridgefield Road subdivision. He stated there are no historic property issues and the board paid good attention to the Memo from Conservation with our suggestions. He confirmed the trees and stonewalls noted in the memo will remain.

Mr. Simone is also the liaison for the month of February.

XI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 1/6/16

Ms. DiLoreto MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes, SECONDED by Ms. Algon, and CARRIED 4-0-0.

XII. ADJOURN – Ms. Algon MOVED to adjourn at 9:40pm, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto, and CARRIED 4-0-0.

Next meeting will be March 2, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs