

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

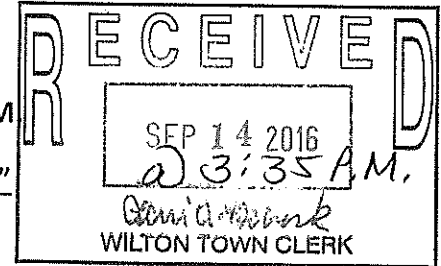
238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY September 7, 2016 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"



MINUTES

- I. PRESENT: Donna Merrill, Acting Chair, Jackie Algon, Frank Simone, Colleen O'Brien, Jade Hobson, Susan DiLoreto and Dan Berg via phone
- II. ALSO PRESENT: Mike Conklin, Director of Environmental Affairs, Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs
- III. CALL TO ORDER – Ms. Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm.
- IV. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- V. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None
- VI. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks Reports –

Bradley Park – A scout completed some work in Bradley Park and the Commissioners received a copy of the thank you letter.

Horseshoe Pond – Ms. DiLoreto confirmed additional plants are to be delivered on Friday, September 9th. She noted that Jeff Lapnow would bring a weed whacker to address the mugwort problem but it was discussed that it may be too late to weed whack as the seeds would spread.

Lions's Fields – Mr. Conklin alerted the commissioners that an Inland Wetlands Permit Application has been received by Jeff Yates at Trout Unlimited to remove invasives and replant natives at Lion's Fields. The NRWA will help Trout Unlimited fund the project and a Boy Scout will complete the potentially approved activities.

Quarry Head – Ms. Merrill reported positive feedback from the June work day event. There will be a donor recognition lunch at Quarry Head the week of September 12th. Ms. Merrill noted Lars Cherichetti completed a great amount of work over the summer including clearing the red trail.

Schenck's Island – Mr. Conklin confirmed the chess tables have been installed. He indicated the Town of Wilton will coordinate with the Land Trust for mowing. Mr. Conklin noted the garbage bins are emptied weekly by the Department of Public Works. He also confirmed the plantings will be installed within the next month. Ms. Algon stated Suzanne Knutson had some new ideas to bring to Mr. Conklin. Mr. Conklin responded that Kiwanis is the major project donor and changes may have to be approved by the Town.

Spencer/Rice Preserves – Ms. Hobson confirmed the blazing was completed in late June with the assistance of Ms. Merrill. Ms. Merrill noted she will paint over the old blazes soon.

Vista Road & Wild Duck – Ms. Algon reported many limbs down and noted it is difficult to find the trails in Wild Duck as it is mostly open. The property is not steep, but is uneven with large roots.

B. Conservation Activity Log Updates

Quarry Head Trail Consolidation – Ms. Merrill confirmed the next work day is scheduled for September 24th and it will be a repeat of the June work day starting from the point where it was left off in June and working towards the stream. She will send an e-blast to recruit volunteers. There is a Boy Scout Troop that has some interested volunteers. She added the White Trail which is on Land Trust property may need some similar work.

Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan – Ms. DiLoreto confirmed the cool season grasses are being planted. Mr. Conklin confirmed he would remove the watering system during the winter months.

Ms. Merrill stated the NRWA is participating with Horseshoe Pond to use an REI grant for enhancements. Mr. Conklin stated he is meeting with Anne Deware and the First Selectman to review the treatments for the pond as the 3-year herbicide program is ending. He added that another fundraiser may take place at Marley's. Mr. Stahl of Pond & Lake Connection will be invited to our October meeting to provide a review of the program for commissioners.

Park Walks/Talks – Ms. Algon prepared a chart of walks and talks she shared with the members. She stated that each commissioner should consider leading a walk in their assigned park and media should be used to get the word out.

Ms. Merrill notified the commissioners that Pound Ridge Conservation started walks for educational purposes. She suggested the Town and the Land Trust should conduct joint walks for those parcels that abut each other.

Mr. Conklin suggested holding off on signing up for a walk until the park assignments are finalized later on the agenda. Commissioners were asked to email Ms. Larkin with any walk ideas within one week. Ms. Algon stated refreshments are important after each walk so it is best to have two commissioners; one to lead the walk and one to stay by the refreshment table.

The next walk will take place on September 11th at Wild Duck which is Ms. Algon's park. There is another bird migration walk being scheduled for October, and November will be the nighttime sky watching walk.

Carry In/Carry Out Initiative – Nothing new to report.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto noted the past two meetings were cancelled due to lack of quorum. She also announced the passing of Barbara Quincy, a former member of the committee. It was noted that Ms. Algon has worked very hard through the summer drought to keep the donated trees watered at the Library.
- ii. Deer Committee – Mr. Conklin confirmed the Deer Committee had their hunter kick-off meeting with approximately 45 hunters. He confirmed there are no major changes from last year's program and archery season starts September 15th.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated the Land Trust is going through a transition bringing their infrastructure into the 21st Century. She indicated the Land Trust is assisting the Fire Department by locating potable water for the Fire House in North Wilton from the Walter Preserve across the street.

Ms. Merrill confirmed Alice Levin, who passed away last year, had requested an conservation easement on 13 acres of her land which will be granted to the land trust. This transaction can be used as leverage and an example of how this process works so others may decide to do the same. Ms. DiLoreto stated there is a template she uses for the Rhode Island Land Trust for donations that can be shared with the general public. As the tax laws have changed, there may be an enhanced benefit for donations.

D. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill stated the combined Hudson to Housatonic (H2H) may not come to fruition as the Fairfield County Partners are reluctant to work with New York since everything is working smoothly as is. They are afraid the goals will be diluted with more parties. She then noted she is working with a Lake Group in Ridgefield to collaborate the saving of lakes that are dying.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day** – Mr. Conklin notified the commission that the Wilton collection is being held on October 29th and he would like everyone's assistance. He mentioned the location may change as he is hesitant to ruin the new paving at Miller Driscoll School, in the event something spills.

- B. Dogs off Leash at Town Forest** – Mr. Conklin reported that a concerned resident called as his wife encountered five dogs that were off leash which scared her. He stated there is no way for the commission to enforce the use of a leash and stated the ordinance includes keeping your dog “within voice control”. He asked the resident to call the Dog Warden for future concerns.

Ms. Merrill stated there is a big dog walking issue in Wilton. She noted towns such as Weston, Westport, Easton and Fairfield have animal control staff that educate the public. The commissioners considered revising the dog ordinance but Mr. Conklin stated a revision to require leashes may not be enforceable. Ms. Algon suggested education and noted that a designated dog park would be a great addition to the town. Mr. Conklin confirmed some trails at Town Forest were eliminated to keep dogs from disturbing the large tracts of woods within the park interior.

- C. Liaison Schedule** – Ms. Larkin noted Ms. Hobson and Ms. O’Brien did not have any liaison assignments and Mr. Simone had the most with three. Ms. O’Brien agreed to take the month of February, and Ms. Hobson will take the month of May.
- D. Park Assignments** – Ms. Larkin noted Mr. Berg had the most assignments with four parks. Ms. O’Brien agreed to take Norwalk River Park & Fields and Town Forrest.
- E. Set Aside Assignments** – Ms. Larkin noted the open space parcels need to be redistributed but as the parcels are known as numbers, more information will be compiled for discussion at the next meeting.
- F. Library Display** – Ms. Algon would like to create awareness in our community for the walks. She suggested getting pictures taken for display at the Library which has been approved by the staff there. Mr. Conklin confirmed he contacted Gretchen Yengst, a local photographer, and started this conversation a year ago. He confirmed she looks at lighting conditions and does not capture faces.

VIII. LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Algon confirmed she attended one Inland Wetlands meeting in July.

Mr. Berg is the September liaison.

XI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

7/6/16 Meeting – Mr. Simone MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes, SECONDED by Ms. Hobson, and CARRIED 6-0-0.

7/26/16 Site Walk – Mr. Simone MOVED to APPROVE the site walk minutes, SECONDED by Ms. Hobson and CARRIED 6-0-0.

8/5/16 Special Meeting – Mr. Simone MOVED to APPROVE the Special Meeting minutes, SECONDED by Ms. O’Brien and CARRIED 6-0-0.

- XII.** Mr. Simone made a MOTION to ADD Kent Pond Discussion to the agenda, SECONDED by Ms. Algon and CARRIED 6-0-0.

Ms. Algon stated that Kent Pond is in decline. There is an issue with invasives and the

water looks very bad. There were water fowl that would live on the pond in the past and this year, no water fowl were observed. The pond is 16 acres in size and very shallow at a depth of 2 – 4 ft. Ms. Algon confirmed she met with the First Selectman, Lynne Vanderslice, and she agreed to help fund an evaluation. Mr. Conklin stated the neighbor interest needs to be determined, or any activity that is undertaken would be undermined by neighbors who may use fertilizer on their lawn. It was confirmed that drainage comes from Keeler's Ridge to the smaller pond just north of Kent Pond, and then into Kent Pond. Mr. Conklin asked that any further meetings of the commission be held in the town hall meeting rooms.

XIII. ADJOURN – Mr. Simone MOVED to adjourn at 9:03pm, SECONDED by Ms. Hobson, and CARRIED 6-0-0.

Next meeting will be October 5, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs

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