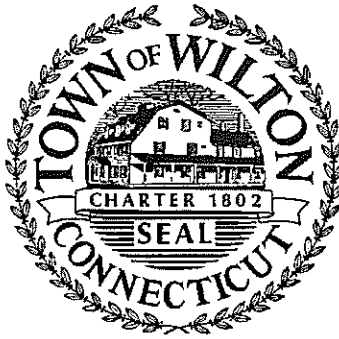


CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Telephone (203) 563-0180

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TOWN HALL

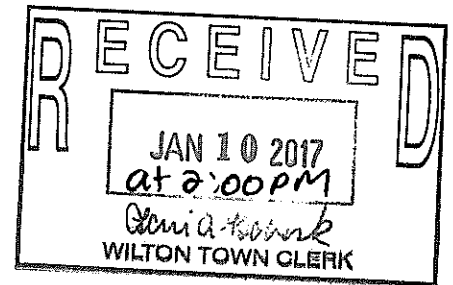
238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY October 5, 2016 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"



MINUTES

- I. PRESENT: Dan Berg, Chair, Donna Merrill, Jackie Algon, Frank Simone, Colleen O'Brien, Jade Hobson, Susan DiLoreto
- II. ALSO PRESENT: Mike Conklin, Director of Environmental Affairs, Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs
- III. CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Berg called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.
- IV. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS

**A. WET#2407(S) STEVENSON – 417 Belden Hill Road – construction of an in-ground pool**

Mr. Conklin described the property as having a house on a hill, stone wall in back, and a conservation restriction area past the wall. The property owners would like to install a lap pool close to the back of the house as there is no room for a conventional pool. Mr. Conklin showed the construction access, soil stockpile area, and soil and erosion controls. He noted the stone wall acts as a natural barrier. Ms. Merrill suggested the commission ask for some mitigation plantings. Mr. Conklin responded the area is already a nice habitat so plantings may not be necessary.

Mr. Simone asked about the large culvert he witnessed during his site visit. Mr. Conklin explained that has been there for many years and explained the wetland function is the conveyance of water. He noted the conservation area can only be mowed once per year and no tree removal is requested for this proposal. Mr. Conklin also noted the property owner had previously moved the spa, trampoline and fire pit from this conservation area per his recent request once this violation was discovered.

The Conservation Commission did not offer any comments for this Inland Wetlands referral.

CC Minutes 10/5/16

\*Minutes have not been reviewed by this Board and may be subject to revision in future minutes.

V. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None

VI. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks Reports –

**Cherry Lane Park** – Mr. Conklin stated a neighbor to the park complained that someone is dumping ash material and yard debris. He noted the Police are involved, letters have been sent to the neighbors, signs have been erected, and a newsletter article may be prudent.

**Bradley Park** – Ms. DiLoreto stated a new tree has fallen in the northwest corner of the property. She confirmed that someone had recently complained about maintenance on the trails, but when she walked them, they were fine. Mr. Conklin agreed as he recently walked the trails as well.

Mr. Conklin advised he has been in contact with a Girl Scout Leader who is interested in Geocaching in Bradley Park. He confirmed he is allowing them to leave the Geocache near Counsel Rock as it will not require users to walk off the trail which could cause erosion issues. Mr. Conklin stated this program could take off in the future with contests and the like which would get residents out to the parks.

**Quarry Head** – Ms. Merrill stated the recent work day at Quarry Head was a success with 28 people in attendance. She acknowledged that Dave Francefort is terrific to work with and the trail looks great. The blazing and temporary signs have been completed and Mr. Francefort has agreed to have one more work day to work on the Land Trust trail system which will complete the loop. She stated boardwalks will be required and the timeframe for this phase will take place in April 2017.

Ms. Merrill stated that she understands REI has provided grant money to NRWA for three projects and only one has been completed. She suggested that the other two projects could include finishing the NRWA trail network, and contribution for the plantings being proposed at Horseshoe Pond. Ms. Algon corrected Ms. Merrill by noting the grant was a total of \$5,000 to rework the trail map, and once that money is used, the grant would be complete. She added that there may be some money left over which can be used for a work day as REI wants their employees to give back to the community. Ms. Algon also noted that if these projects go well, REI may be inclined to provide further grants.

B. Conservation Activity Log Updates

**Quarry Head Trail Consolidation** – Previously discussed.

**Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan** – Ms. Merrill confirmed she met with Anne Deware of Project Lily Pad and they are planning another fund raising event at Marley's either October 24<sup>th</sup> or November 14<sup>th</sup> to assist with the cost of eradicating the lily pads. She noted that Ms. Deware has been in touch with Jeff Stahl of the Pond & Lake Connection to obtain a recommendation to keep the pond stable after three years of treatment. Ms.

Merrill suggested he be invited to our next meeting, along with the neighbors, to discuss the process and what else should be done to ensure the problem does not return.

Ms. Merrill reviewed the second phase of the project, which she is calling phase 1B, which will take place between now and 2018. This phase of the project includes removing invasives and replanting around the corner of Horseshoe Road just to the east of the recent plantings. Ms. DiLoreto noted that an arborist would be required as some of the limbs are large and hang over the pond which will require machinery to remove. Mr. Conklin noted that Mr. Lavaty, who has generously provided electricity for the irrigation system, has requested this area remain in a natural state. He added that Mr. Lavaty may not allow more electricity use for next summer so there may be no way to water any additional plantings. Ms. DiLoreto confirmed the goal is simply to remove vines and broken branches. Mr. Conklin advised that no spaces should be opened that would change his view.

Ms. DiLoreto suggested adding plantings between the pond and the Norwalk River Valley Trail at the southern end of the pond to create some ground cover. Ms. DiLoreto asked Mr. Conklin if he spoke to Dept. of Public Works about the fill for the Garden Club area. Mr. Conklin responded that he has not spoken to them as of yet. He added there is an old pool which is approximately 9 ft. deep that Dept. of Public Works wanted to fill. He stated this would require a wetlands permit and there are benefits and losses with this proposal.

Ms. DiLoreto asked if there was any money available to do a small clean up. Mr. Conklin suggested using Joe Cass from Chip-Away.

**Park Walks/Talks** – Ms. Algon stated the Allen's Meadows Fall Bird Walk was postponed until October 16<sup>th</sup> from 8:30am to 10:30am with Joe Bear.

Ms. Algon confirmed the Night Sky Watch will take place at 6:30pm at Quarry Head on November 6<sup>th</sup>. She noted Mr. Conklin was looking into the possibility of having a fire in the fireplace and s'mores and two telescopes will be available. She indicated the date was chosen for the dark sky at the beginning of Standard Daylight Time. The commission discussed the possibility of a cloudy night. Mr. Conklin suggested moving the event to Slaughter Field which is more open to the sky and has better parking options. Ms. Merrill confirmed she would speak with Steve White of the Land Trust to get his approval for this and confirmation that hunting will not take place on the date of the event. Ms. Merrill confirmed a neighbor, who is a beekeeper, has asked them to wait to mow the field until the goldenrod is done for the season.

Ms. Algon confirmed there will be a talk at the Wilton Library with Carrie Sears, an expert on eradication of invasives, on October 18<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Sears will share her successes with her project at Pound Ridge Reservation. Ms. Algon added that there will be an event to remove invasives at Merwin Meadows this weekend.

The commission discussed possible walks in January and February including another bonfire at Schenck's which was a hugely successful event that residents are asking to re-do.

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

**Schenck's Island** – This item was tabled.

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

- i. **Tree Committee** – Ms. DiLoreto stated the Tree Committee is in the process of tagging trees in the center.
- ii. **Deer Committee** – Ms. Merrill stated the hunting season is underway but they had no meeting in September. She noted the Aspetuck Land Trust, who has some properties in Wilton, were previously opposed to hunting their lands. Ms. Merrill confirmed she presented to their board and there was an overwhelmingly positive response after learning about the devastation they have experienced in their 20-acre parcel from deer browse. Mr. Conklin confirmed this land is contiguous to other parcels being hunted and is a win for the town.
- iii. **Land Trust** – Ms. Merrill stated the Land Trust is going through a transition bringing their infrastructure into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. They are assessing their goals which include getting conservation into the consciousness of all residents.

**D. Regional Projects**

- i. **Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership** – Ms. Merrill confirmed the Partnership still plans on convening the Conservation Commissions sub-regionally. She is working with MaryEllen Lemay to put substantive information together to share lessons learned. She confirmed Marjorie Shansky, Land Use Attorney from New Haven, is involved, as well as Bob Russell who may be asked to moderate. She confirmed the meeting would ideally take place in February of 2017.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Schenck's Island Committee Plan** – Mr. Conklin confirmed he met with Lynne Vanderslice to go over his first draft of the charge of the new committee. He confirmed she would like to see the committee up and running within the next two months. He also noted that she asked Mr. Berg, as the Chairman, to approve the draft from Mr. Conklin prior to it arriving at the Board of Selectman level. Mr. Conklin stated the charge evaluates current use, public need, and develops a plan of what it can be going forward. He also indicated the committee will be under the purview of the Board of Selectman with two members taken from the Conservation Commission, two members of the Parks & Rec Commission, and one member each from Planning and Zoning, Economic Development Committee, and the Board of Selectmen. This committee will most likely meet twice a month.

Mr. Conklin provided some history on the park whereas it was purchased by the town in 1968 to build a post office, train station and housing, but since the land is in a flood zone, nothing could be built there. The parcel remained as woods until 2003 when a

master plan was created that would turn the area into a "Central Park" at a cost of \$800,000. The vote was turned down. At that time, the town and the Land Trust entered into an agreement to maintain the parcel as a meadow with passive non-intentional recreational uses until 2017.

Mr. Conklin stated the town may retain a landscape firm to evaluate the proper uses while keeping the area as natural as possible. Ms. Hobson suggested Mike Nado with NOFA, but Ms. Merrill thought he may have retired. Ms. Algon suggested finding out who designed the Bronx Zoo Native Garden as they did an amazing job. Mr. Conklin noted Trout Unlimited may be completing their work on the riparian buffer at the same time.

Ms. DiLoreto raised concern about maintaining control over what is approved at the park. Mr. Conklin stated the two Conservation members would be able to make suggestions and vote accordingly. Ms. DiLoreto asked where the funding for the improvements would come from. Mr. Conklin stated it would be public and private donations. Mr. Berg stated he would be more comfortable getting feedback on the charge prior to approving for the Board of Selectmen. A motion was made to provide Dan the authorization to review the charge without ability for the commissioners to review but did not carry. Ms. DiLoreto stated this is happening too fast and she would like to have more control of the committee.

Mr. Berg made a MOTION to have a Special meeting to discuss the charge prior to being approved for Board of Selectmen review, SECONDED by Ms. Algon and CARRIED 7-0-0.

Mr. Conklin will send an email to all members with date options for this Special meeting.

- B. Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day Update** – Mr. Conklin reiterated that he will need commissioners to come out on October 29<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 – 1 for assistance during the event which is being held at Miller Driscoll. Most commissioners indicated they would be there. Mr. Conklin noted the name of the program has changed to HazWaste which has less of a negative connotation.
- C. Library Display** – Mr. Conklin confirmed he has not called the Library but plans to soon.
- D. Route 7 Wetland Near Cannondale** – Ms. Algon noted the trees in this location are being hit by lawnmowers and it is killing the trees. She asked if these trees would be replaced by the State. Mr. Conklin confirmed this is State of CT DOT land and the town has no purview over their activities.

## **VIII. LIAISON REPORT**

Mr. Berg confirmed he attended one Inland Wetlands meeting in September where the 166 Old Huckleberry Road corrective action application was being discussed. He noted the soil stabilization was an issue and the date the plantings were to be installed was determined. He reported he listened to the Pedestrian Bridge application which he stated would be great for the town.

Mr. Simone attended a meeting on Mr. Berg's behalf and three applications were discussed: Bellino, Cannon Road, and Brubeck. He noted there are interveners for the

Brubeck matter.

Mr. Algon is the October liaison.

**XI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –**

**9/7/16 Meeting** – Ms. Algon MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes, SECONDED by Ms. O'Brien and CARRIED 7-0-0.

Mr. Berg noted that his term is ending in December and he has accepted a position on the Economic Development Committee.

**XII. ADJOURN** – Ms. Hobson MOVED to adjourn at 9:44pm, SECONDED by Mr. Simone, and CARRIED 7-0-0.

Next meeting will be November 2, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,  
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs