

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY November 5, 2014 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL ANNEX - MEETING ROOM "A"

MINUTES

- I. PRESENT: Dan Berg (Chair), Donna Merrill, Susan DiLoreto, Frank Simone, Jackie Algon
- II. ALSO PRESENT: Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst; Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs
- III. ABSENT: Jill Brown (not notified)
- IV. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Berg called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.
- V. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS - None
- VI. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS
 - A. **SP#394, The Lake Club, Inc., 165 Thayer Pond Road, to allow replacement of lighting on tennis courts 2 and 3**

Mr. Conklin stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission has an application from the Lake Club to reface tennis courts 2 and 3 as well as replace the lighting. As nighttime lighting is a conservation issue, this commission completed a site walk just prior to the meeting. During the site walk, the commission was able to see the existing lights at these courts and the proposed new lights that were installed in a different location. Mr. Conklin confirmed the proposed lights face more downward than the current lights at these courts, so this would be considered an improvement for migratory birds. Mr. Conklin will send a letter of support of the proposal reiterating the importance of dark sky for birds to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Ms. Algon confirmed the current lights are 40 ft. and the new lights will be 24 ft. high. Ms. Merrill asked if they will have screening on the lights and Mr. Conklin confirmed they did have them on the new lights but the screening had recently blown off of two of the lights and will be replaced according to The Lake Club staff.

- VII. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks Reports – Mr. Conklin confirmed that all commissioners received his emailed staff report. He stated that Belknap and Sackett have been mowed recently and that he has been busy posting hunting signs at the town parks.

B. Conservation Activity Log Updates

Ms. Merrill indicated that a meeting will be scheduled with Dave Francefort to discuss the Quarry Head trail consolidation project.

Ms. Merrill stated that she would start the Horseshoe Pond Long-Term Management Plan after the first of the year.

Mr. Berg confirmed the Facebook page now has 250 likes. He will post the information for the next park walk to garner interest. Ms. DiLoreto stated she would send Mr. Berg the Tree Donation brochure for posting.

Ms. Algon confirmed that the first walk at Schenck's Island was well attended with 18 people present. The feedback was very good and it was a beautiful day. The next walk will be held at Town Forest on Sunday, November 23rd at 1:00pm lead by Mr. Berg. The Wilton Bulletin will run an article on November 20th. The commissioners agreed that Pin Oak would be the best place to meet and start this walk as there is ample parking. The commissioners also decided that walks will not be held in December and January, and will pick back up in February with a possible snowshoeing theme.

Mr. Conklin noted that each commissioner has a copy of an email from Joseph Bear who is interested in assisting with the Allen's Meadows birding habitat. Ms. Merrill stated that the Artemisia creates a dead zone where birds cannot get shelter or food and that mowing this area allows native grasses to grow back. Mr. Conklin stated that there is a specific area in question where two debris piles were removed and flattened where this Artemisia has taken over. Mr. Conklin recommends speaking with Mr. Bear about other areas in town where we can use his expertise. Mr. Simone did not want to use town resources as there are many birds all over town. Ms. Merrill stated that the Connecticut Audubon has a huge push right now to ensure birding habitats are plentiful. Mr. Conklin confirmed Allen's Meadows is a Parks and Recreation property and the request to mow would be difficult from a timing and funding perspective. He recommends asking Mr. Bear to look at Belknap. Ms. Merrill asked if we could try to raise funds to accommodate this work. Mr. Conklin added that grants may be available. Schenck's Island was discounted as an option as it is complicated with the Land Trust and Theresa Mucci.

Ms. Merrill stated that early succession growth is best for birds such as under power lines. Mr. Conklin offered to liaise with Parks and Recreation and Mr. Bear to get a feel for what would make the most sense per Ms. DiLoreto's recommendation. Ms. Algon suggested mowing a portion of the deer enclosure to see if birds come due to new growth. Mr. Conklin stated that mowing our parks is very expensive and we have parks that need attention at this time of year. The commission determined that the property falls under the

Parks and Recreation Commission and Mr. Bear should work with them to implement any changes in the property.

C. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto confirmed that any year that the Go Green Festival does not take place, the committee will still award a Tree Steward and plant a tree in their name during the Arbor Day celebration. She added that the committee is considering a class to teach residents about trees.
- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill stated there was no quorum for the last meeting so she has nothing new to report.
- iii. Land Trust – Ms. Merrill stated that the Hudson to Housatonic (H2H) project is in full swing.

D. Regional Projects

- i. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership – Ms. Merrill indicated they have created focus groups and landowner outreach with 14 focus areas. The next meeting is being held on November 17th and more activity will be coming to Wilton soon.
- ii. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Mr. Conklin confirmed that the new section kick-off event went well and funds are being raised for the next portion which will be Sharp Hill to Skunk Lane.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Keiser Access Relocation – Mr. Conklin confirmed 5.27 acres of the Keiser property have been purchased by Peter Gaboriault who wants to subdivide the land into 2 lots. He wishes to keep one lot as open space and take advantage of the tax reduction under Public Act 490. The current swath of land that provides access to the open space cuts separates his newly acquired 5.27 acres and the rest of the Keiser property (which he also owns), so he is asking if the 25 foot wide access point can be moved north to connect his potential open space lot with other open space land (Keiser property). While completing this shift, there will be an opportunity to open up the view to the entire property. Mr. Conklin confirmed the parking area will align with the new access way. A split-rail fence has been proposed if the area is developed to avoid encroachment. The proposal would provide the town with another 2 acres of open space for 10 years so the commission was comfortable with this land swap.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Recap – Mr. Conklin confirmed the event went well and the cost for the removal will be significantly less expensive with the lack of paint collection. Mr. Conklin explained the difference between a full and half household to the commissioners. He indicated his push for next year will be on non-hazardous batteries and Compact Fluorescent Light bulb recycling.

Trail Guide Update Discussion – Mr. Conklin confirmed this year's budget allows for the re-printing of the Walkers Guide so he asked the commissioners to consider the changes

they would like to implement. The commission discussed the lack of good mapping and stated GIS Maps would be preferred. Mr. Berg asked why the books are printed in this digital age. Other commissioners stated that they would like to keep the printed book and have an online option. Mr. Conklin stated he would like to contact Google Earth to see if our trail maps could be updated on their site. He also noted the kiosks should be updated with our website information and Mr. Berg recommended a QR Code. The commission then discussed the use of a professional photographer, but decided this could be expensive.

IX. LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Algon confirmed she did not attend any meetings in October as there was nothing conservation related. Ms. DiLoreto is the liaison for November.

X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 10/1/14

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

XI. ONGOING BUSINESS (Continued)

A. Conservation Activity Log Updates – Ms. Algon noted that this was skipped under the Activity Log Updates but confirmed there is nothing new to report.

XII. ADJOURN – Mr. Berg MOVED to adjourn at 8:50pm, SECONDED by Ms. Algon, and CARRIED 5-0-0.

Next meeting will be December 3, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin, Secretary, Environmental Affairs