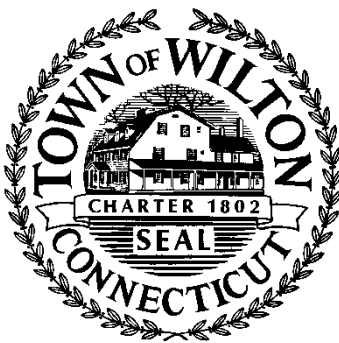


CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

November 6, 2013 – 7:30 P.M.

TOWN HALL - MEETING ROOM "A"

Present: Dan Berg (Chair), Patrice Gillespie, Frank Simone, Susan DiLoreto, Kristen Begor, Donna Merrill

Also Present: Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst, Liz Larkin, Recording Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Berg called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. INLAND WETLAND REFERRALS

A. WET#2228(S) CHEMLALI – 161 Linden Tree Road – “corrective action” for unauthorized clearing and grubbing in a wetland

Mr. Simone, Ms. Merrill, Ms. Gillespie, and Ms. Begor indicated they visited the site.

Mr. Conklin explained that the violation was discovered while completing a scheduled inspection on the neighboring property. The owner had removed trees and stumps and completed grading within a wetland system, without a permit.

When Mr. Chemlali learned of his violation, he hired a soil scientist to flag the wetlands and subsequently submitted a restoration plan, which is before the Inland Wetlands Commission for approval. The owner's goal is to create a paved driveway, lawn, and walkway in the front of the house to provide direct vehicular access to the front door. The proposed mitigation for the violation includes a 4 ft. wide rain garden to the east of the new driveway, and a 4 ft. retaining wall to the west of the rain garden, as well as restoring the disturbed wetland with 1,800 sq. ft. of native trees and vegetation. Mr. Conklin confirmed a portion of the canopy was removed but that the area still has oak, beech, and black gum trees. He added that there is a small portion of the current driveway that is paved which will be removed.

The alternate option Mr. Chemlali submitted with his application includes a relocated parking area closer to the existing garage, within an existing landscaped area. He is proposing a retaining wall along the front of the home which will reduce the lawn area and allow for a greater mitigation area. Mr. Conklin explained that the small paved driveway area will be removed with

this option as well.

Mr. Berg asked if either of these proposals would be approved outright, if the homeowner did not have a violation. Mr. Conklin confirmed that it would most likely be an intermediate level activity and it could be approved by the commission on its own.

Ms. Begor stated that she prefers the alternate option and confirmed that it would allow the owner to get what it seems like he is looking to accomplish. She noted that the slope is steep and maybe the homeowner was trying to get more light into the house with the removal of the trees. Ms. Merrill agreed with Ms. Begor and stated it would be appropriate to replace the disturbed area with low native wetland plants which would minimize or eliminate the lawn. Mr. Conklin stated that a driveway and lawn are similar as long as the driveway is pervious.

Ms. Begor noted that she saw some large nicks on some trees near the violation and suggested that they were not being careful as they were planning to remove more trees before they were stopped by Mr. Conklin. She reiterated that the alternative proposal is preferred with the reduction of lawn and the commission agreed.

III. PLANNING AND ZONING REFERRALS - None

IV. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Parks – Ms. Merrill stated that she wanted to discuss where the commission stands with the Horseshoe Pond pesticide application. Mr. Berg confirmed that the approval was granted and they have started fundraising efforts lead by Anne Deware. The commission discussed having a more long-term plan with the mitigation of the lily pads. Mr. Conklin stated that there is a proper way to deal with invasive management and Ms. Begor noted this was done with Schencks Island. Ms. Merrill noted that she went to a conference recently on invasives and that some towns, like Greenwich, have said the battle is lost with the management of stilt grass, garlic mustard, and euonymus. The commission agreed that they would wait to see how the first year of pesticide application works, and come up with a plan once this is known.

Mr. Berg noted that he received an email from Alice Levin stating that a neighbor of Sackett Preserve thinks Sackett is in “deplorable” condition. The commission discussed what could be so wrong that it is considered deplorable as there have been some projects completed recently at this property. Ms. Merrill stated this is her park and she has recently hand-pulled invasives along the driveway. Ms. Sesto had indicated she would contact the neighbor and ask for specific examples of what could be done to improve the property for this neighbor.

B. Park of the Month – The commission discussed the lack of interest at the summer park walks. Ms. Begor stated that many people are away during the summer months. Ms. DiLoreto stated that Sunday afternoons may be better than Saturday mornings. The commissioners agreed to put the walks on hold for now and to concentrate more on doing small projects in the parks as a group. Ms. Gillespie stated that she needed assistance pulling garbage out of her set-asides.

The commission discussed the option to get young people involved with the stewardship of our parks. Mr. Conklin stated a scavenger hunt may be a good option as it would be fun and there could be a prize such as an ipad. Ms. DiLoreto noted that this can be a lot of work, so the commission would need to ensure the amount of work that comes out of it would be appropriate for the gain. Mr. Conklin confirmed there was a drawing contest a few years back with the clean-up day, and with three top prizes, and only three submissions were received.

C. Kaiser Property Update – Mr. Simone asked if the walks in the Kaiser property were well received. Mr. Conklin confirmed that they were. Mr. Conklin also noted that Ms. Sesto has provided presentations to many town groups such as Realtors, Kiwanis, Rotary, League of Women Voters, and the Garden Club. Mr. Conklin noted that the presentation is up on the town's website for anyone that is interested. The commissioners were encouraged to write a letter of support from any other town groups that they are a member of. The vote will take place on November 19th at 7:30pm in the Clune Center. There will also be an option to vote November 23rd, from 9am to 5pm, also at the Clune Center.

D. Set-Asides – Ms. DiLoreto stated that she did not know that set-asides existed when she joined the commission and indicated that she would like to encourage land owners to learn about, and help with their set-asides. She asked if the commission could send out a letter to all abutting property owners to instill ownness. Mr. Conklin stated this would be a big task. Ms. Begor suggested this as a newsletter topic for the Spring edition so that all residents can become more educated.

E. Work with other Commissions/Committees

- i. Tree Committee – Ms. DiLoreto noted that the committee has not met since the last update so there is nothing to report.
- ii. Deer Committee – Ms. Merrill reported that the hunt is ongoing and 54 deer have been harvested in Wilton per the DEEP website prior to the weekend. She confirmed the goal is 300

deer this season and that they will really start to move once the weather gets colder.

- iii. Energy Committee – Ms. Gillespie reported that the committee is co-hosting an upcoming breakfast with major commercial property owners to advise them of the C-PACE energy program that is being offered.

Ms. Gillespie reported that the vehicle charging station, which the town won in the home energy audit contest, will be installed before Christmas at the Comstock Community Center. The intent is that as more charging stations are installed, more residents will purchase electric chargeable vehicles and any new Town of Wilton vehicles, such as the Dial-A-Ride Truck, will be purchased with a plug-in option.

Ms. Gillespie also confirmed that the Ambler Farmhouse is working on energy updates in a phased program.

- iv. Go Green – Ms. Gillespie stated that Becky Bunnell, the co-founder of Wilton Go Green, is working on a vision statement to go along with their mission statement. She is looking to make Wilton the most sustainable town in all of Connecticut.
- v. Land Trust – Nothing to report.
- vi. Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership (FCRCP) – Ms. Merrill reported that when this group first came together in 2008, it was simply a gathering of Conservation Commissioners and Land Trust members to share what is going on. It has since turned into the creation of a strategic action plan for the connectivity of open space.

She confirmed there is a steering committee that is working with several groups on strategies, goals, objectives, and action steps that each member brings back to their respective groups. She stated she would have action steps for this committee after their next meeting. Ms. Merrill added that there are many groups represented here and there is a grant that Yale is helping the members obtain.

- i. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Ms. Larkin confirmed that the groundbreaking ceremony will take place at the Gaylord South entrance of the trail at 11:00am the following day. All were invited to attend.

V. NEW BUSINESS

2014 Meeting Schedule – Commissioners received the 2014 Meeting Schedule via email prior to the meeting. Ms. Larkin noted that the meetings are always held on the first Wednesday of each month, with the exception of January when the meeting will be pushed to the second Wednesday as the first is New Years Day.

Ms. DiLoreto MOVED to APPROVE the 2014 Meeting Schedule, SECONDED by Ms. Begor, and CARRIED 6-o-o.

VI. LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Begor confirmed that she sent her notes via email prior to the meeting. In addition, she noted the October 14th Planning and Zoning Meeting included the approval for outdoor seating at Pinocchio Pizza at 44 Old Ridgefield Road. They will also re-do the parking lot which will reduce the spaces from 131 to 127 spaces, with only 95 required per their regulations. She noted that the Wetlands meeting on October 24th included the presentation for the turf field at Middlebrook School.

Ms. DiLoreto is the liaison for November.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 10/2/13 –

Ms. Gillespie MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes as drafted, SECONDED by Mr. Simone, and CARRIED 6-o-o.

VIII. Mr. Berg thanked Ms. Gillespie for her many years of service and presented her with her gift, a flowering tree planted in her honor in Wilton Center.

IX. ADJOURN – Mr. Berg MOVED to adjourn at 8:57pm, SECONDED by Ms. DiLoreto, and CARRIED 6-o-o.

Next meeting will be December 4, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Larkin
Secretary, Environmental Affairs