



Town of Woodbury Conservation Commission

281 Main Street South
Woodbury, CT 06798
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**WOODBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, December 5, 2023
7:00 p.m., – Shove Building, 281 Main Street South**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

D. Taylor, Chairman
L. Peters
J. Sherman
T. Clark
D. West
C. Aberg

MEMBERS ABSENT:

B. Hickey

1. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Taylor began the meeting at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was established.

2. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Taylor presented the minutes of the November 9, 2023, Conservation Commission meeting for consideration. He called for discussion. L. Peters had a minor correction.

MOTION:

To approve the minutes of the November 9, 2023, Conservation Commission meeting as amended:

- Section 4.a – 1st paragraph, 3rd sentence: should read “Richard Coates, who will be also on the Board of Finance...”

Made by L. Peters, Seconded by J. Sherman

Vote: 6-0-0 – Approved – Motion Passed

Ayes: Taylor, Peters, Clark, West, Sherman, Aberg

Nays: None

Abstain: None

3. CORRESPONDENCE & OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Taylor informed the commission that the PRWC has completed their analysis of the stormwater management study from over the past year and would like to do a presentation. They approached D. Taylor in hopes of arranging the presentation. It will most likely be scheduled for an evening in January at the Senior Center. Discussion commenced on how it would be good to invite the Public Works Department along with the Parks & Recreation Department. The Commission brainstormed on how to get information on presentations and events advertised better to the public. The event should be put on the Town calendar. It might be put on the Park & Rec Facebook page, the Senior Center newsletter, and the Voices. A press release with a photo might be used. Chairman Taylor will be speaking with Lauren Roy at the Senior Center to coordinate the event.

Chairman Taylor informed the Commission that he attended a Zoom meeting with NVCOG. They have a grant from the State to create an open space database on the 19 towns in their purview. This process will be happening over the year.

4. CURRENT BUSINESS

a) Pollinator Pathway Presentation at Woodbury Library

Chairman Taylor reviewed that the programs would take place on February 15th and 29th. He spoke to Vince LaFontan from Flanders who is very enthusiastic to be a panel member on the 29th. Marla Martin from the library is organizing; But the Commission should also have an organization plan for the actual meeting. This event will also need to be advertised. Chairman Taylor was looking for a member to come up with a task list of how to get the word out. L. Peters will work on that. C. Aberg said she would distribute information at Woodlake. D. Taylor will speak to M. Martin to see how many people are allowed to attend and ways to set up an RSVP for the event. The Garden Club and Flanders can also help promote the program.

b) Trash Reduction Pilot Program

L. Peters stated that the Committee has had two meetings. They are supposed to get their recommendation to the BoS by the end of January. Now that the Committee chair is back in town, things will start moving forward. She noted how there is a company in Vermont where the town can actually purchase their own anaerobic digester for the transfer station which would then eliminate tipping and transfer fees. The machine runs about \$300,000. It would be good to have a short term plan of unit base pricing and a long term plan to purchase a digester. She would also like to see recycling and composting bins put outside of the transfer station gate so that people can participate without having a sticker. The town has to determine if they want to give bags to residents for free to participate in the program or charge for them. The Commission was upset to hear that the bags are not in fact compostable with the composting facility that is being used.

The Selectmen's office is applying for a grant though DEEP to extend the program until the next budget in July. The Committee is also trying to go and visit a town of similar size that already has a successful program to see how they do it. Chairman Taylor thought that it is a good idea to make that happen. He also felt that the Committee should push back on the recommendation date since the budget is not set until May. This program is too important to push it through and possibly get it wrong.

c) **Three Rivers Park**

The P&R department has gone to the IWA for moving the large tree into the bank and to fill in and stabilize the bank. The matter is progressing well. There is a bigger study on the rest of the bank, widening the riparian area and stabilizing the bank. There are grant sources available and Chairman Taylor felt progress was being made in obtaining a grant writer.

d) **Stomski Way, Minortown Road**

J. Sherman gave an update on the project. The area was mowed and the concrete pipes have been removed. He handed out aerial photos to the members. There is about 10 acres of usable space. He noted that it is wonderful to walk the perimeter. He is going to speak with Marti Sherman of the Garden Club and Jamie Gore of P&R to give some suggestions for native flowers, a pollinator pathway, and a meadow. He would like to have a presentation by February. He will also speak to Rory Larson from the Steep Rock Association about their pollinator meadow. Having an entire vegetation plan would be good rather than piecemeal. Chairman Taylor will also be following up with the Selectmen's office regarding the fence and access to the area.

e) **Hollow Park Master Plan**

The P&R department has held public meetings and is close to wrapping up. There are two variations on plans for what is wanted. The idea of a sprinkler system has gone away. There is talk about installing a bridge over the river, which would be a very expensive project. Since the entire park is in the flood plain, all plans will need to go through the IWA.

f) **Open Space Brochure**

Chairman Taylor brought the Southbury brochure to the printers to get an estimate of price. He is still waiting on that estimate. The members discussed what type of maps they will need for the brochure. Chairman Taylor suggested maybe character maps denoting trail heads and indicators rather than actual maps. T. Clark had the P&R maps. She will speak to the graphic designer about them and see what can be put together.

g) **Newsletter**

C. Aberg noted that she has the basics on the newsletter. Earth Day, town clean-up, the trash pilot program and the pollinator pathway are highlights. The new stormwater management program will be added. She will get the information to T. Clark in the next week or so to finish. The goal is to send it out in the beginning of January.

h) **2024 Meeting Calendar**

Chairman Taylor noted that the dates for meetings to be held are remaining the same. Due to the Presidential preference for early voting, there may be a need to hold the April and August meetings at another location.

i) **CACIWC Conference Notes**

L. Peters reported on the conference. She noted much was very technical and a bit depressing all about climate change. One unit she attended was from Sustainable CT. She found out that in order to qualify for Sustainable CT again the town would need to start from scratch. There are some grants available if a town is certified. She attended another unit on a Solution to Food Waste. DEEP is pushing unit based pricing. The town of Westport had a presentation on their trash reduction program. They said that their program is voluntary. The most successful towns get the school systems involved in composting.

The third session she attended was about stormwater management in CT. She ended up speaking to Kyle Turoczi there who expressed how upset he was about the rain garden getting filled in at Mitchell School. Carol Haskins was also there and spoke about the repairing plan for the Mitchell school parking lot. L. Peters will compile her information and notes and send out to the other members.

She also noted how Nonnewaug High School won the CT Envirothon competition for aquatics, soils, forestry, and wildlife. She will speak to Terry Fernandes of the NHS guidance department about getting the students of the AP Environmental Science class and other students involved in conservation efforts.

j) Open Space Issues, Input to Departmental Budgets

Chairman Taylor asked for maintenance items that should be forwarded to the PW or P&R departments to put into their budgets. The Commission will ask for \$2500 for any additional HWA treatments. J. Sherman had recently been out to Nonnewaug Falls. He spoke with the lady whose property abuts the falls. She is a good source of information and history. He saw the tree that had fallen and felt that there was nothing that needed to be done. There is no environmental impact. Nature will take its course. Chairman Taylor noted that the Trolley Bed has a wet area near the reservoir that should be platformed. He will suggest that to the P&R department for their budget.

J. Sherman is not sure what more will be needed at Stomski Way for treatments. He will have to wait and see what comes up. There are still some funds left in the current budget that should be used by June. The Commission should have a plan for the funds which will help support requests for future funding.

5. MEMBER TIME

J. Sherman noted that fish are stocked in the Pomperaug, Nonnewaug and Weekepeemee rivers in the spring, but only in the Pomperaug in the fall.

T. Clark stated that Earth Day will be happening. There is no date yet. The P&R department will be sponsoring the event with some community partners.

6. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Jeffrey Taranovich, 274 Quassapaug Road, addressed the Commission. Mr. Taranovich was alerting the Commission to violations that have occurred at 280 Quassapaug Road that have resulted in destruction of mature hardwood trees and a conservation area. There has also been interconnection into the town's stormwater management system performed illegally. He has taken the issue to the Public Work's department who permitted an illegal driveway on the property. He has also gone to the Zoning Commission. The owner of the property has been contacted and is supposed to enact a remediation plan that was agreed upon with the Land Use office by November 1, 2023. The property is still in a state of non-compliance. The Zoning Commission has issued a Cease & Desist Order for several violations. Mr. Taranovich is reaching out to all departments involved so that they are aware and can hopefully assist with resolving the matter. *Mr. Taranovich's full statement is attached to the end of this document.*

Kathy Doyle, 35 Washington Road, addressed the Commission. Ms. Doyle noted to the Commission that at the November ARPA meeting, Sue Shephard considered that ARPA funds could be used towards Three Rivers Park. They will meet again in February. Ms. Doyle recommended that it would be helpful to get the engineering aspect for the area completed now so that they would be ready to apply for funding through grants, such as the LIFF (Long Island Futures Fund). She mentioned that part of the ARPA funding is allocated for trails which could be used at Three Rivers Park. Chairman Taylor stated that he had met with the First Selectman recently and discussed the need to accelerate the Three Rivers project. They will be meeting with a small group to discuss sourcing of the funding and organizing the project.

Ms. Doyle also mentioned that she will raise the issue again with the BoF and the BoS regarding where the farm lease money goes. The rent for the farm leases goes to the general fund. She would like to see those funds be put aside into a special dedicated fund for these properties to help with riparian buffers, plantings, etc. There is a need for these funds at several properties. If a plan was developed it could put the money right back onto the leased properties enabling the resolution of the serious issues of the riverbanks.

Ms. Doyle noted that CCM (CT Conference of Municipalities) has grant writers that the town can access. This is an avenue that could be used for obtaining grant money before the town makes the official decision to have a grant writer in the budget. She also encouraged the Commission to use the Town Facebook page along with QR codes as a way to get information about events out to the public.

Ms. Doyle was disappointed that the Hollow Park Master Plan was not presented initially to the Land Use boards before presenting it to the public. She hopes that the plan does not try to squeeze too much into the park. She thinks that a pickleball court near the river is not a good idea. She expressed concern that if there is going to be a splash pad or beach area then there also must be water testing. Chairman Taylor pointed out that there has to be a management plan to go along with any renovations.

7. NEXT MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting is scheduled for January 2, 2024.

8. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION:

To adjourn the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Made by D. West, Seconded by L. Peters
Consensus of the Commission in favor 6-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Robyn Wright

Robyn Wright
Clerk for the Conservation Commission

RECEIVED & FILED
IN WOODBURY, CT
This 7th day of Dec 2023
at 3:03 o'clock PM
Maia M. Mancini
Town Clerk

Copies of documents and meeting audio are available at the Land Use Office

conservation commission

Good evening, my name is Jeffrey Taranovich, I am the property owner of 274 Quassapaug Rd. Thank you for taking the time to let me speak tonight. I want to make you aware of several violations concerning a conservation area in the Scutter development located on Quassapaug Road and how the public works administration and the property owners facilitated the destruction of this area. A bogus driveway permit was issued for this property and a second driveway was installed over a year before a zoning, building and public health permit were submitted, approved and issued. The owners of this property proceeded to construct a driveway through this area which the town is responsible for. Mature hardwood trees, nutrient rich topsoil and an old field Stonewall were destroyed and removed from this area. Now in its place is a crushed stone driveway, a paved apron, piles of rocks, debris, dirt lacking proper sediment controls and several underground drain pipes that have been interconnected into the town's stormwater management system. Through a little research I have found that the public works administration issues permits out of line with the current town's process and allows residents to destroy such areas and interconnect into the town's stormwater management system with a simple "just let us know you are doing it", not keeping records or knowing the source of or if they are even legal or approved by the building, zoning and public health departments. This administration solely relies on what the individual who is conducting the work and interconnection is telling them, not even looking at or requesting an approved site plan for the work to be done. To the best of my knowledge the individual responsible for authorizing the interconnects to the stormwater system is the same person who would take complaints on violations, inspect such violations, report the violations and sits on a committee to ensure compliance with the MS4 General Permit. The current policy should be reviewed to ensure that proper checks and balances are conducted and have proper oversight so that not just one person or department can do whatever they want and hide their illegal actions. This is concerning to me that this administration allowed or had knowledge of previous interconnections at this location and authorized additional illegal interconnections. With these pipes flowing water days after rain has stopped makes me question the source. If this was done next door to me, where else in the town has this occurred and/or continue to occur. There is an agreed-upon action plan between the property owners and the town for this area to be remediated by November 1 2023 but is still in a state of non-compliance. I suggest that a licensed professional in the restoration and remediation of such lands be consulted and conduct the necessary work to rectify these issues. Thank you for letting me share my concerns and I hope this information helps protect and continue to protect our future environmental concerns.