



Town of Woodbury Conservation Commission

281 Main Street South
Woodbury, CT 06798
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WOODBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 3, 2024

7:00 p.m., – Shove Building, 281 Main Street South

MEMBERS PRESENT:

D. Taylor, Chairman
L. Peters
J. Sherman
T. Clark (*arrived 7:02 p.m.*)
D. West
C. Aberg

MEMBERS ABSENT:

W. Ryan

1. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

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

2. APPROVAL OF AUGUST MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Taylor presented the minutes of the August 6, 2024, Conservation Commission meeting for consideration. He called for discussion. There were some minor changes.

MOTION:

To approve the minutes of the August 6, 2024, Conservation Commission meeting as amended:

- Section 4.b- Second sentence should read: "...conversations with the PVGC (Pomperaug Valley Garden Club)...in September"
- Section 5, second item should read: L. Peters

Made by L. Peters, Seconded by J. Sherman

Vote: 5-0-0 – Approved – Motion Passed

Ayes: Taylor, Peters, Sherman, West, Aberg

Nays: None

Abstain: None

3. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no current business to consider.

4. CURRENT BUSINESS

a) Proposed Solar Farm

Members of the public were present for discussion about the solar farm. The Commission decided to adjust the agenda to allow the audience to participate.

MOTION:

To amend the agenda to cover Privilege of the floor during Current Business (a) Proposed Solar Farm

Made by L. Peters, Seconded by D. West

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

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

Nays: None

Abstain: None

5. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

1. Bill Burgess, 12 Fawn Meadow Lane, addressed the Commission. Mr. Burgess has an abutting property to the proposed solar farm. He moved to Woodbury in December of 2021. Prior to that he resided in Litchfield and served on Conservation there along with other town boards. He believes that there is a lot of good to be said about the proposed application, but there are always risks that should be tracked. Several neighbors have collaborated with Green Skies (solar company) with the objective of gaining insights and hopefully influencing the outcome. As a result, there is a written agreement between the Town and Eversource for the coaxial cable to be installed underground.
2. He noted that the Pomperaug River Watershed has five wetland areas around the watershed. There are many abutting wells within 500 feet of streams. That area of the property is privately owned and will not be developed; however, the drainage from the site goes east to west and will end up in the streambed. He suggested that the Conservation Commission and the Inland Wetlands Agency coordinate to walk the property. He noted that while the approval of the application comes from the CT Siting Council, the town has the ability to ask for restrictions or conditions of oversight. He mentioned the example of the Litchfield Stop & Shop that had swales put in on a project. However, there was no condition for inspection or maintenance of the swales. This resulted in material entering into White Memorial. The Siting Council looks for evidentiary insights, opinions, and possible conditions from the town. The project is very lucrative for Green Skies and they will generally comply so as not to have the project held up. He noted the large solar project that spans the town lines of Litchfield and Torrington. Litchfield imposed conditions whereas Torrington did not and the difference in application is very evident with Torrington not having buffers put in near abutting properties.

3. John Trainor, 6 Fawn Meadow, entered the discussion. Mr. Trainor spoke in favor of the project but just wants it done right. The formal meeting of the Siting Council is on October 3, 2024. Written statements can be submitted prior. Comments will also be allowed at the meeting, but prior registration is necessary. Comments must be limited to three minutes. Bob Burke, 213 Church Hill Road, was also present. Discussion commenced between the members of the public and the Commission. It was noted that a huge trend now on solar farms is to utilize the land in conjunction with the array. Many projects have sheep or chicken grazing on the land. This has proved beneficial for farmers and for the solar company. Another possibility is planting natural dye plants. The panels provide shade for the plants or animals. Uconn plant scientists are involved to help provide suggestions for best practices and create a plan that will enhance the environment.
4. The next steps would be to have the chairs from the Conservation Commission and the IWA to get together and walk the property. After that, letters can be written and a statement can be made. Members of the public will not get involved until the Town is. The Siting Council invites the town to help guide them. Mr. Burgess stated that their concern is that “is this privately owned wetland area that is conservation restricted, that the town has enforcement ability for, based on observing it does it warrant any recommendation other than to leave it as is.” T. Clark mentioned that her aunt who is an environmental engineer said that glare can be a significant factor if there are no barriers. She noted it would be helpful for the Zoning Commission to be involved so that the conditions worked out for this project might be added to the new Zoning Regulations to apply to future projects.
5. Mr. Burke is concerned about storm water flow and electromagnetic field emissions. He presented a map of the aquifer. While this is not on the proposal, he is concerned because the aquifer feeds many houses. He wondered how to protect the area if there will be any potential groundwater contamination. He stated that since the field has been used for hay, there has been no problem with stormwater runoff. Clerk Robyn Wright pointed Mr. Burke to the Aquifer Protection Agency which falls under the Zoning Commission. He was directed to speak to the Town Planner about this concern. Mr. Burke thanked the members for volunteering their time.
6. Chairman Taylor noted that the Conservation Commission’s concern and focus is on stormwater management, drainage, and ground returning water. They will look at the two parcels on either side of the property and what needs to be cleaned up. There was discussion on what the members would be looking for in walking the property. He will also talk to the PRWC and see how they are involved.

The meeting returned to Current Business

b) Farm Lease Prototype

Chairman Taylor had sent information to the members about how the First Selectman will be taking an open approach on open space area leases. There will be a Request for Proposals to determine which farmers the town will work with. Then there will be a lease application based on the one used in the town of Mansfield before approval. Chairman Taylor is asking the members to consider the information and make insights, suggestions, and recommendations that they would like to include in the lease applications. The process must be designed by the end of this year. T. Clark would like someone besides the Selectmen to look at and approve the leases. Chairman Taylor instructed the members that the primary duty of the Conservation Commission is to advise

the Selectmen. He requested that they forward their ideas and thoughts to him to send to the Selectmen.

c) Stomski Way

J. Sherman noted that there is not much new on the project. He walked the property after the storm and there was very little affected. He will contact the town to mow a path since access to the river was difficult. The knotweed contractor is scheduled for the second week of October.

d) Fall Clean-up Day

J. Sherman noted that the cleanup is scheduled for October 5, 2024, at the Hollow starting at 8:30 a.m. The members spoke of providing pizza for the volunteers. They also discussed having families with children working near the rivers so that they are off the roads. Information will be sent out on the email list.

e) Three Rivers Park Restoration

Chairman Taylor noted that the plan is still in review.

f) Pollinator Pathway

D. West reported that she met with two people involved in the Cheshire Pollinator Pathway. They were very enthusiastic and are willing to help mentor on this initiative. There are three main points that she recommends using. 1) establish communication about approved plants, 2) having a residential program with signs to identify those who meet the criteria, 3) establishing a hook area, like Route 6, the George Washington, and North Greens to establish recognition of the program. Getting businesses involved would also be good. D. West will contact the Garden Club to work on putting together a plan to bring forward to the Commission.

g) Open Space Monitoring

Chairman Taylor passed out a list of the assigned open space areas and encouraged the members to walk them since the storm. Any problems from the storm should be reported immediately to qualify for funding. He walked the Trolley Bed area with W. Ryan and said there was a lot of erosion on the trail and a culvert was blown out. He will also contact the Parks & Rec Department to put up signs on how the public can notify them of any issues.

h) Next Newsletter

C. Aberg is working on the formatting with T. Clark.

i) Open Space Issues

There were no other issues to discuss.

6. MEMBER TIME

T. Clark stated that she feels all the schools should have solar panels on their roofs.

J. Sherman noted that he was looking into what is to be done with invasive plants that are pulled up. There may be a plant in Bristol where you can burn them. He will contact White Memorial to see what they have done in the past.

D. West noted how the Middle School parking lot had been repaved. Discussion ensued about how L. Peters has tried to bring this up but has gotten nowhere. If the parking lot is being replaced as is, then there is no requirement to go to the Zoning Commission.

L. Peters spoke of a memorial for Annie Musso. She will respond to Annie's mother and ask if they have any specific places that they are thinking of.

7. NEXT MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting is scheduled for October 1, 2024.

8. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION:

To adjourn the meeting at 9:33 p.m.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Robyn Wright

Robyn Wright
Clerk for the Conservation Commission

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

RECEIVED & FILED
IN WOODBURY CT

This 10th day of Sept 2024
at 7:50 o'clock A.M

Maria M. Mancini
Town Clerk