



*Patricia Sesto
Director*

Town of Greenwich Conservation Commission

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Conservation Commission Meeting
via a Zoom virtual meeting.
January 6, 2022

Minutes

Members present: William Rutherford, chairman, Eric Brower, vicechairman, Nancy S. Dickinson, Lisette Henrey, Gary Silberberg, Sue Baker, Laura di Bonaventura, Karen DeWahl, Theodore H. Walworth III, and Leslie Petrick (joined at 7:30pm)

Staff present: Patricia Sesto, Director of Environmental Affairs; Sarah Coccaro, Conservation Resource Manager; and Aleksandra Moch, Environmental Analyst

Attendance: Tom Heagney, Heagney, Lennon & Slane, LLP; Andrew White, PE, Tighe and Bond, LLC; Rick Canavan, Soil Scientist, PWS, Tighe and Bond, LLC; Brian Cleveland, Associate at Buchanan Architects, LLC; Sean Ragan, Tighe and Bond, LLC

- 1) Call to Order
Meeting called to order at 7:06 pm by Rutherford
- 2) Seating of Alternates: All full members were present
- 3) Review and approve minutes of December 2, 2021

Motion was made by Silberberg and seconded by Baker to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion passed unanimously.

- 4) Review of Correspondence
No correspondence.
- 5) Chairman's Report

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Rutherford stated the proposed site development project at Meads Point will be scheduled for discussion at the February meeting. All information will be forwarded through Sesto. There should be no discussion between the members outside of the scheduled hearing.

di Bonaventura asked what regulatory power the commission has regarding the application. Rutherford explained the commission is advisory to P&Z. di Bonaventura noted staff's comments were already provided to P&Z on behalf of the commission. Sesto responded that the commission as a whole has time and opportunity to provide additional comments. Rutherford added the staff handles most of the projects, but the commission has the right to step in when desired. In this case, the environmental significance of the site warrants more detailed evaluation.

6) Referral Applications

- a) 1141 King Street, 1141 King Street LLC, Conservation Cluster Development, Tom Heagney, Agent

Rutherford noticed all members were present at the site walk. Heagney described the project as a 19-acre site currently supporting a residence and a barn. A large meadow is located within the central portion, most of which coincides with the designated wetland. The surrounding area consists of residential and commercially developed properties and the naturally maintained Audubon property to the east. He pointed out, Chieftans, another conservation cluster development located adjacent to the subject property.

Tom Heagney, Heagney, Lennon & Slane, LLP, stated during the pre-application meetings with the Planning and Zoning Commission several options were considered with conservation cluster development appearing to be the most suitable for the site. There will be a single driveway serving five homes. A tennis court, a shed and a greenhouse will be constructed on the western side of the wet meadow area. Eighty-five percent of the land will be maintained as a green area. A walking path and boardwalk will be installed around the perimeter of the property. The wetland area will be supported by natural buffers. Geothermal wells will address the heating and cooling needs and town water will be hooked to the site. The houses will be served by individual septic systems.

Andrew White, P.E., Tighe and Bond, LLC, described the site design elements. The residences will be placed along the ridge line to minimize the need for cut and fill. He spoke about wetlands located at the site entrance and flanking the accessway. The development plan calls for a 22-foot wide driveway. Porous pavement will be used for the courtyards. The site will use bio-swales and rain gardens to address storm water management. The wetland buffer area will be expanded and maintained also as a meadow.

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Rick Canavan, Soil Scientist, PWS, Tighe and Bond, LLC, stated the frequency of mowing the meadow was discussed at the IWWA meeting. To maintain the overwintering habitat, the meadow will be mowed every second year in early spring.

White described in detail the bio-filtration and storm water detention functions. He assured the goal of this design is to maintain the existing drainage patterns at the site.

Brower gave an overview of the conservation zone subdivision regulations. The goal is to maximize open space while providing a density bonus for the cluster development. The conventional subdivision requires up to 15% open space while conservation subdivision calls for 40% open space. The open space in conservation subdivision is used to calculate FAR so more density is allowed.

The current proposal does not satisfy the conservation subdivision requirements thus text amendments have been proposed, including minimum acreage required and the number of units allowed. Mr. Heagney stated the proposed changes will make the conservation subdivision regulations more attractive to developers.

The members voiced a variety of concerns including:

- There is additional land suitable to be covered by conservation easements.
 - The eastern section of the driveway and the area around the proposed tennis court is being proposed should be considered.
 - It is possible to protect 60% of the parcel as open space without compromising the development.
- The percentage of open space is not sufficient for the size of the parcel and the intensity of the proposed development.
- Endorsement of the proposed text amendments would apply townwide and need to be evaluated in that context.
- Steep slope protection is needed.
- The new fill will create steeper slopes. White explained the grading is driven by the proposed configuration to maintain the offset from the property lines and keeping all the elements together.
- A wider meadow buffer could be created and the Belgium block demarcation moved closer the proposed structures.
- Trees were cut down prior to the site approval. Some of this work was done within the proposed to be preserved areas.
- Mature elm tree within the Unit #3 area should be preserved.
- A revised map should be submitted to indicate which trees will be preserved, especially within the septic areas.
- The proposed landscape plan is not adequate to cover for the lost trees. More trees should be planted along the common driveway to shade the paved areas.
- The proposed 'Green giant' Arborvitae along the meadow should be replaced with white spruce or other native trees beneficial to the local wildlife.
- Flowering native trees should be considered for the site landscaping to support local pollinators.

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- The grading associated with the driveway leading to unit 4 & 5 should be re-evaluated and minimized. A common drive for these two units should be explored. Relocating the swimming pools would also decrease the need for grading.
- The proposed plants are not deer-resistant. They should be replaced by native plant which will boost the environmental functions of this site.
- The tennis court should be moved closer to the road. The proposed incision will fragment the habitat and impact the ecological values. Noise and light generated by this recreational area will impact the existing wildlife migration patterns and interrupt their habitat.
- The concept of common septic system was brought up, but dismissed by White stating the Health Department was against it.
- Preservation of the existing stone walls was explored. The archeological report recommended saving as many sections as possible, especially within the undisturbed areas. More opportunities for preservation were highlighted including the eastern stretch of the parallel stone walls.
- Proposed soil erosion and sediment control measures are located on the Audubon land. In addition, some of the trees cleared by the site developer were on Audubon land.
- It was requested that the proposed text amendment be submitted to the CC for review.
- Generally speaking, walking paths are acceptable within conservation easement areas. Therefore, otherwise undeveloped sections of this parcel with paths should be considered for permanent protection. The boundary along the restricted areas should be more fluid and follow the natural land contours rather than drawn as straight lines.

7) Fisheries/Wildlife: staff provided written report to the members on the following topic:
a) Fish Ladder – Coccaro

8) Ongoing projects: staff provided written report to the members on the following topics:
a) Pollinator Pathway – Moch
b) Sustainable CT new “Climate Leader” Designation – Coccaro
c) FEMA HMGP – Coccaro

9) Education/Outreach
a) Environmental Affairs intern
Sesto reported an intern was hired and begins in January.
b) Could EV Charging Station Profit Your Business workshop host by Cos Cob Library and organized by the CC, Sustainability Committee and Greenwich Chamber of Commerce on February 16, 2021 at 2:00 pm. – Moch

10) Committee and Liaison Reports
a) Open Space Committee

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Sesto stated the draft will be presented at the upcoming meeting on January 7th.

b) Sustainability Committee

Sesto reported the new Selectperson, Janet Stone McGuigan took over for Jill Oberlander and has become a great advocate for the committee.

- (1) Transportation and Air Quality subcommittee a written report was provided by the staff to the CC members.

c) GRAB

Dickinson reported, Waste Free Greenwich had open a new food scrap collection site at the Round Hill Community Church. She pointed out a study posted on their website showing that most of the so called “compostable food wares” are not digested in our local composting process.

d) Parks and Rec Board

Baker stated the sailing school was discussed.

e) Harbor Management Commission

Baker stated a lot of new dock projects are being submitted and are being reviewed by Coccoaro and her.

f) Leaf Blower Committee

Sesto stated she had a discussion with Quiet Yards Greenwich group on the value of being a committee of the Conservation Commission and value of being independent. The decision was made for Quiet Yards to work independently. While the staff will no longer participate in the meetings; Petrick, Henrey and DeWahl will continue their work on the initiative as community members and keep CC updated. Rutherford supported the decision.

11) Old Business

- a) CTDOT Corridor Study grant: no update

- b) Coastal Resiliency Report

Sesto stated scope changes due to COVID and the decision to create a story map created an \$11,000 exceedance of the budget. BET approved requested allocation and she next goes to the RTM for final approval.

12) New Business

Baker asked about the status of the flood markers. Brower responded the efforts are moving forward.

Sesto was pleased with the final outcome of the work on “Colored” portion of the Byram Cemetery. She was thankful for Bower’s and Dickinson’s involvement and the fact that the descendants were pleased with the outcome. The bronze plaque will be placed in spring.

The long-term maintenance of the upper portion is of concern. Some people have taken it upon themselves to clean the tomb stones in detrimental ways. Clear guidance should be developed so the site will receive a consistent treatment.

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Rutherford was pleased with Sesto's coordination and a great team work of all participants. The graded areas were hydro seeded and mats were used to cover the disturbed soil.

13) Adjourn at 9:28pm – next meeting is February 3, 2022

Submitted by

Aleksandra Moch
Environmental Analyst