

**Conservation Commission Meeting
Cone Room
February 6, 2020**

Minutes

Attendance:

Members present: William Rutherford, Nancy Dickinson, Eric Brower, Gary Silberberg, Theodore Walworth, and Laura di Bonaventura

Staff present: Patricia Sesto, Sarah Coccaro, and Aleksandra Moch

Audience Present: Andy Chapin, Greenwich Audubon; Nancy Chapin, Board of Parks & Recreation; Elizabeth Dempsey, Conservation Advocates and BYO; Myra Klockenbrink, Sustainable Committee and Waste Free Greenwich; Andy Duus, BET; and Peter Schweinfurth, Greenwich County Day School

Commission Discussion Session – 7:00 p.m.

1) Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm by Rutherford

2) Seating of Alternates: Walworth was seated for Henrey and di Bonaventura was seated for Baker

3) Review and approve minutes of January 2, 2020 meeting: Motion was made by Silberberg and seconded by Dickinson to approve the minutes as corrected.

4) Review of Correspondence: A copy of new issue of *Connecticut Wildlife* magazine was handed out to the Commission members. Coccaro shared a copy of *Neighborhood* newsletter featuring an article on recycling.

5) Chairman's Report: Rutherford provided an update on Binney Park restoration project. The island was planted, and the gazebo's fireplace was removed. Additionally, the adjacent patio area was replaced. Several old trees will be replaced with new native trees at a ratio of 2:1. DPW will replace two bridges. He was pleased to see a large number of plants added to the landscape.

6) Schedule for 7:30 pm – Speaker Alexandra Bergstein, Connecticut State Senator District 36 – S.B No. 76 – An act authorizing municipalities to restrict the use of pesticides in certain areas of the municipal or on certain types of properties.
The presentation was canceled by Bergstein.

Elizabeth Dempsey filled in to request Conservation Commission support to the efforts of creating pesticide free buffers between the area managed by the Metropolitan

Transportation Authority and private properties. This temporary moratorium is spearheaded by Terry Wood and Matt Blumenthal and it will include all coastal towns from Greenwich to Westport. The buffer will consist of 3-foot wide sliver along both edges of the controlled area. This initiative is made in conjunction with the representatives of the Environmental Committee of the CT General Assembly and the moratorium will be officially presented on February 10th. If approved the moratorium will protect the declining population of pollinators, improve the quality of storm water runoff, and reduce workers' exposure. This temporary moratorium will allow time to collect the data supporting the need of pesticide-free buffers.

di Bonaventure asked for more details on the scope and methods of data collection. Sesto pointed out the collected data will help to specify what works and what doesn't so the language of the future bill can be modified as needed.

After a short discussion the consensus was reached to direct the staff to write a letter endorsing the proposal.

7) 2020 Priorities

The discussion was postponed to the next meeting to allow more time for the members to review the list.

di Bonaventura found the list long and not very realistic in terms of the given time frame. She suggested the tasks be organized into groups to better reflect the actual work of the commission. Ms. di Bonaventura and commission staff will meet to review the structure.

8) Staff Reports

a) Conference/Program reminders

- Sustainable CT webinars and events – ongoing
- Earth Day, April 22nd, 2020 – 50th Anniversary of Earth Day
- May 3, 2020 – Conservation Commission hosting lecture at First Sunday Science Series on World Fish Migration Day and Mianus River fish ladder.
- May 16, 2020 – World Fish Migration Day and Mianus River fish ladder Open House event.

9) Ongoing projects

A written report was provided by staff and forwarded to the Conservation Commission members on the topics below:

a) DPW/CC pollinator project

b) High Water Markers

Brower stated the existing four markers will be updated to reflect the new datum. He showed the newly printed markers. This project is paid for by the Conservation Commission.

Coccaro explained the High School Students work on the design of new posts because the current ones are too short to display all of the past flood elevations. The current

updates will serve the short-term need, while the new posts will satisfy the long-term goal.

- c) Phragmites removal at Bruce Park
- d) Food Scrap Recycling Pilot Program – fundraising with “ioby”
- e) Earth Week in schools

10) Education/Outreach

Silberberg suggested Sesto secures monthly air time with WGCH to report on new programs.

A written report was provided by staff and forwarded to the Conservation Commission members on the topics below:

- a) Neighbor Magazine article
- b) Waste Reduction Program
- c) Green Schools

11) New initiatives

A written report was provided by staff and forwarded to the Conservation

Commission members on the topics below:

- a) Electric School Busses
- b) Artificial Turf: Commission Position was discussed at the end
- c) Sustainable Committee
- d) Pay-As-You-Throw

Sesto reported the program is driven by the new waste disposal contract which may result in up to \$920,000 in new fees for recycling. The Pay As You Throw program has been successful used in many municipalities, resulting on average in 40% reduction of trash. Incinerators processing waste in CT are in poor shape, breaking intermittently, and causing the waste to be tracked to Pennsylvania’s landfills.

Currently Greenwich does not have tipping fee, which gives no incentives to reduce the wastes for the households.

The new program will not result in any changes other than trash has to be disposed of in specialize Town of Greenwich bags. The bags will be available at numerous retail outlets, such as local grocery stores, CVS, etc. Consumers will be paying for the waste disposal via purchasing the bags. The bags will be offered in two different sizes.

Waste Free Greenwich, jointly with GRAB, will be working on education in addition to the scheduled to be launching of voluntary food scrap collection program in April. Collection of organic waste will be a great complement to the PAYT and efforts to reduce the waste.

12) Committee and Liaison Reports

- a) Parks and Rec Board: Baker was absent at the meeting but emailed her report to the Conservation Commission members.
- b) GRAB: Dickinson reported Pau-As-You-Throw and Green School Committee initiatives were the highlights of the meeting. The schools are getting new waste

sorting stations. A recent waste audit indicated that 2 tons per school annually can be diverted from the waste stream (saving of \$180/per ton).

The Board of Education considers two different proposals for dishwashing at schools allowing the transition from disposables to reusable wares.

There was a report on the progress of the pilot program for the voluntary food scrap collection at Holly Hill. The group had applied for grant via Sustainable CT program. Greenwich Green and Clean will provide a loan to purchase the home food scrap collection kits which will be offered to the public at cost.

Fred Camilo, First Selectman attended the meeting to talk about the Pay-As-You-Throw program.

Skip the Straw, BYOB, Conservation Commission staff and other enthusiastic volunteers met to discuss the potential for an ordinance on plastic straws and Styrofoam.

- c) Harbor Management Commission: Baker was absent at the meeting but emailed her report to the Conservation Commission members.

13) Old Business

- a) Sea Level Rise Study – update: Sesto reported Princeton Hydro had reviewed and assessed the sea level rise predictions as well as the town’s building and zoning regulations. Tidal ponds will be studied in spring. The final presentation of their findings is planned for November. The purpose of this study is to predict the degree of impact on municipal infrastructure of the sea level rise up to year 2100.

Sesto gave a presentation on the effects of climate change in Greenwich at the monthly event sponsored by the Retired Men’s Association of Greenwich.

- b) Mylar Balloon – status: Silberberg requested the Environmental Committee of the CT Senate to embrace the initiative. Sesto will write a letter of support.
- c) Energy Commission – update: Sesto encouraged the Conservation Commission members to talk to RTM members and advocate the need for the Energy Commission. di Bonaventura offered to attend district eleven committee meeting and Walworth will communicate with his Neighborhood Association to gain support.

This proposal was introduced at the RTM meeting in January. The Legislation and Rules Committee had provided revisions which were incorporated to the language. One of the main questions asked by RTM members was why this issue cannot be taken on by a committee which does not require their approval. There were also concerns a new commission will cause another level of bureaucracy. Sesto responded, the commission will fill in the gap since none of the departments are taking energy on

resulting in lost opportunities for grants supporting renewable energy sources and energy savings improvements.

14) New Business

- a) Aquarion property at Lake Avenue: Sesto reported a deal has been reached to protect the Aquarion property. The public-private partnership between Town and Greenwich Land Trust will result in GLT owning the property and the Town having an overlying conservation easement. The contract to purchase is in process of being drafted. Simultaneously, an easement language is being drafted. The cost to protect the property will be added to the upcoming budget.

Rutherford recognized Sesto for her hard work on the project and expressed his disappointment of her name not mentioned in the recent article published in Greenwich Time.

15) Adjournment: Motion was made by Silberberg and seconded by di Bonaventura to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by,

Aleksandra Moch
Environmental Analyst