

**Conservation Commission Meeting
via a Zoom virtual meeting.
April 1, 2021**

Minutes

Attendance:

Members present: William Rutherford, Nancy S. Dickinson, Sue Baker, Lisette Henrey, Laura di Bonaventura, Gary Silberberg, and Theodore H. Walworth III.

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

Audience Present: Nikki Spiller, Associate Director at Harbor Watch

Commission Discussion Session – 7:00 p.m.

1) Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:03 pm by Rutherford

2) Seating of Alternates: Walworth was seated for Brower and di Bonaventura was seated for Searle

3) Review and approve minutes of March 4, 2021: Motion was made by Henrey and seconded by Dickinson to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

4) Review of Correspondence: No correspondence other than the P&Z reviews.

5) Chairman's Report: no report

6) Presentation - Nikki Spiller of Earth Place: Pollution track down and other work in Greenwich

Nikki Spiller, Associate Director at Harbor Watch, was welcomed. Ms. Spiller presented information regarding Harbor Watch of Earth Place and their work in Greenwich. They have been working directly for the town for about five years. Broadly, HW's daily routine is to monitor water including water temperature, conductivity, oxygen level and bacteria. The work is sponsored by the Long Island Future Fund and local towns. Last year they conducted monitoring in 15 towns and sampled 12 rivers. In Greenwich, they monitor Byram River and Horseneck Brook, focusing on sewage discharges. Byram River exhibits some problems, but nothing major.

Sesto asked if their work is related to MS4 storm water requirements. Spiller responded the work partly supports MS4 requirements, but the main focus is tracking down illegal sewage

discharges and leaking septic systems. The problems normally found in Greenwich are attributed to sewage pipe failures. She stated Greenwich's DPW is quite cooperative and they are quick to respond.

Sesto asked about other rivers in Greenwich. Spiller responded Mianus River is sampled periodically, but due to its high water quality there is no need for more intensive program.

Rutherford asked about her work with Trout Unlimited. She stated they have a very close working relationship with members of Trout Unlimited and have them volunteering for water sampling.

Baker was curious whether or not they can distinguish between different sources of bacteria in their testing. Spiller responded DNA source tracking can determine the origin of the bacteria; whether it comes from human, deer, geese or other sources. This type of sampling is very expensive so the most practical way of approaching the issue is by checking the concentrations. High concentrations point to illegal sewage discharges while lower concentration can result from wildlife gathering.

Testing for medication in water is also expensive and not done often, but the ones done indicated the presence of caffeine, nicotine, and variety of medications.

di Bonaventura asked about internship opportunities. Sesto expressed her appreciation for their internship program. She stated there is a great opportunity to work with Harbor Watch. The skills learned go beyond water sampling and include public speaking skills, report preparation and more.

7) Conference/Program Reminders

- a) Spring Environmental Lecture Series hosted by the Conservation Commission and Cos Cob Library:

“Changing Earth, Changing Climate”, March 31, 2021 @ 6:30pm. To sign up:

<https://greenwichlibrary.evanced.info/signup/EventDetails?EventId=54064&backTo=Calendar&startDate=2021/03/26>

Sesto was pleased with the program and the attendance. Henrey missed one of the lectures. Moch stated the recording of all segments will be posted at the Cos Cob Library website.

In addition to the conferences listed, Sesto will speak at the garden club meeting and the Greenwich Botanical Center.

Silberberg reported about two programs one on whales and the second one on Plum Island which was recorded and is now available at the Save the Sound website. There is an opportunity to donate to the cause.

- b) Sustainable Habitats Using Native Vegetation to Manage Wildlife, lecture, April 7th @ 10am. To sign

up: <https://greenwichbotanicalcenter.org/product/sustainable-habitats-using-native-vegetation-to-manage-wildlife/>

c) Live Like Luke beach cleanup, Saturday, April 24th at Greenwich Point, 11am-3pm.

Sesto reported she is speaking to the tri-club conservation committee of three garden clubs later in April on recycling issues. She will present to the Greenwich Botanical Center in early May on water.

8) Ongoing projects

A written report was provided by staff and forwarded to the CC members on the topics below.

a) Pollinator Pathway

b) Flood elevation posts – update

c) Transportation and Air Quality subcommittee: Sesto reported the East West Bike Route Study was not included into the upcoming budget, but she lauded the efforts of Moch and her allies in garnering public outreach and support.

9) Fish and Wildlife

A written report was provided by staff and forwarded to the CC members on the topics below

a) Fishway: Silberberg shared his experience with spotting dolphins in Long Island Sound. He recalled seeing them several years ago and also more recently.

b) Purple Martins

c) Osprey

d) Canada Geese

10) Education/Outreach

A written report was provided by staff and forwarded to the CC members on the topics below.

a) Environmental Lecture Series with Cos Cob Library

b) Earth Week of Action 2021

11) Committee and Liaison Reports

A written report was provided by staff and forwarded to the CC members on the two first topics below

a) Greenscapes Committee: di Bonaventura reported attending the meeting and being impressed with the level of engagement and willingness to get the projects done. Sesto noted Chestnut Alley's newly planted crocuses are blooming.

- b) Friends of Pinetum, Pomerance, and Tuchman
- c) Parks and Rec Board: Baker reported more events are being planned for later during the season including the Town Party. The Eastern Greenwich Civic Center drew a lot of discussion. They hoping for a major donor to step in. The funds were approved by BET and after RTM approval the project will break the ground.

Baker referenced Nancy Chapin's comments at the P&R meeting about the plans for Pomerance and Binney Parks. Pomerance will receive a plaque which will be attached to the one of the existing structures and Binney will have new benches purchased through a fundraiser organized at the Perrot Library. Both parks will have QR codes installed to help visitors to navigate through the parks and highlight certain features.

On April 15th there will be a zoom presentation talking about the proposed park improvements. Baker believed the Conservation Commission should have a more hands-on experience with the proposed changes.

- d) GRAB: Dickinson reported no meeting. The best way to stay updated on the group effort is by going to the Waste Free Greenwich website. On March 27th the group hosted compost give away event which attracted a large crowd of property owners and gardeners.
- e) Harbor Management Commission: Baker reported the last meeting took place on March 17th. It started with an executive session regarding the Perkley Lane dock project followed by the intensive discussion on mooring.
- f) Open Space Committee: Sesto stated the next meeting is scheduled for April 5th at 10:00am.

Walworth inquired about the Benjamin Mead II House, built 1728, which was recently put on the market. This house is associated with nine acres of land located on the corner of Riversville Road and Cliffdale Road. Dickinson recommended contacting Greenwich Preservation Trust. Di Bonaventura will reach out to the interested party to find potential donors to acquire the land for preservation.

12) Old Business

13) New Business

- a) I-95 project update: no update
- b) Bike study funding request: was discussed above

14) Adjourn at 8:25pm - next meeting is May 6, 2021