

**Conservation Commission Meeting  
Town Hall Meeting Room  
April 5, 2018**

**Minutes**

**Attendance:**

**Members present:** William Rutherford, Eric Brower, Sue Baker, Lisette Henrey (arrived at 7:15pm), Gary Silberberg, Urling Searle, Nancy Dickinson, Theodore Walworth, and Skip Parker.

**Staff present:** Patricia Sesto, Sarah Nahabedian, and Aleksandra Moch

**Audience Present:** Jennifer Turiano, Greenwich Time

**Commission Discussion Session – 7:00 p.m.**

**Meeting called to order** at 7:00 p.m. by Rutherford

- 1) **Seating of Alternates:** Parker was seated for the first 15 minutes for Henrey.
- 2) **Review and approval of draft minutes for March 1, 2018 monthly meeting:** A motion was made by Baker and seconded by Silberberg to approve minutes as corrected. The motion carried 7-0-0.
- 3) **Review of Correspondence:** no correspondence
- 4) **Chairman's Report:**
  - a) Administration
    - FY2019 Budget: Rutherford announced Patricia Sesto as a new Director of Environmental Affairs. She will be overseeing both IWWA and Conservation Commission departments. The commission members welcomed Sesto and, one by one, introduced themselves highlighting their skills and interests.

Rutherford stated the budget was approved as proposed by Peter Tesei. The position of Conservation Director was eliminated, both IWWA and Conservation Commission remain separate, with their own budgets, but under one directorship of Sesto. The position of Conservation Resource Manager was upgraded to full-time.

Patricia Sesto introduced herself to the Commission members. Sesto, after graduating with Environmental Biology degree, found work at the Land Tech and Soil Science and Environmental Services. Both places armed her with good understanding of land use issues and soil science. Prior to Greenwich, she worked

for the Town of Wilton for 23 years. As director of Environmental Affairs, she supervised four commissions/committees: Conservation Commission, Wetland Commission, Tree Committee, and Deer Committee. She was engaged in the state's first watershed management plan and 11 open space areas were preserved during her tenure. The Norwalk River Valley Trail was her last major project in Wilton.

- Staff transition: Rutherford stated he is pleased that both departments, IWWA and Conservation would now be able to establish a new working relationship and better support each other.

## 5) Staff Report

- a) Water supply: Moch reported the water demands for the month of March remained stable and slightly below 12 million gallons per day. There were two larger precipitation events; on March 7<sup>th</sup> with almost 1" and on March 21<sup>st</sup>, about 0.5". Overall, the rain fall is 5" below the 10-year average for this time of the year. As of March 26<sup>th</sup>, the reservoirs were 95.9% full, which matches the 20-year average for this time of the year. Intensive precipitation in February was credited with bringing the levels into range with the long term average.

Brower stated there is a need for updating the groundwater study done by USGS between 2000 and 2002 in Greenwich area. Searle suggested Ian McMillian be contacted for information associated with an older Byram study he purports to have.

b) Fisheries/Wildlife:

- Fishway: Nahabedian reported that on March 14<sup>th</sup> she conducted a training for volunteers. She was excited to say six new individuals joined the group. The monitoring has been going on for three weeks, with over 2,600 fish passing through the ladder. Several new improvements were made to the site by the Marine Division of Parks and Recreation. The box was painted, the fish counter was covered by a metal grate, making the area safer and better accessible to the site monitors, and a couple of steps were constructed for the younger audience.

Open House for World Fish Migration Day will take place on Sunday, April 21 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm.

- Goose management: Nahabedian reported Brower and she went to check on Mill Pond, but no nests were found. Mailing was sent to Mill Pond abutters to let them know about the ongoing program and ask them for help with spotting nests.

Members questioned the absence of signage instructing people not to feed waterfowl, specifically noting the value of such signs at Binney Park. Signs are up in some locations; other signs have gone missing. Nahabedian will investigate further.

- Invasive species control efforts: Moch reported the IWWA staff will conduct invasive species removal from the town-owned property located at 393 North Street. The work will be done with volunteers on April 11<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Doreen Carroll Andrews will lead the group and demonstrate the methods of controlling Japanese knotweed.

Kim Gregory, known as an organizer of Pollinator Potluck, contacted Moch to put together an educational program on managing invasive species in town. The program will include one day of invasive species removal at three different locations in town. This would entail cooperation between Audubon, Land Trust and the Town.

Members requested an update regarding the mile-a-minute vine and weevil project at a future meeting.

- Osprey Nation: Nahabedian stated she is involved in this program. There are ten osprey nests along the coast, which will be monitored this season.
- V-STeM program – CT DEEP: Nahabedian reported she is working with Doreen Carroll Andrews of IWWA on this program. This is a part of the CT DEEP citizen science series where trained volunteers use a data logger to monitor stream temperature. The equipment is provided by CT DEEP. In Greenwich three streams will have thermometers installed for monitoring.
- Horseshoe crab monitoring – Nahabedian reported the monitoring takes place in May and is determined by tides and moon cycles. Last year the crabs were not tagged, only counted. She is hopeful the project will see an increase in survey locations.

#### c) Education/Outreach

- Website Update: Nahabedian provided a copy of the new webpage explaining the difference in the layout and color scheme. Three departments: P&Z, IWWA, and Conservation would be featured under a Land Use package. The new site will enable links to social media. Currently, Nahabedian manages the commission's Facebook page, posting twice a week on average.
- Earth Day Month Event Calendar: Nahabedian prepared the new calendar which includes all environmental events planned for the month of April and May. This calendar was posted at the Town of Greenwich website.
  - (1) Panel Discussion "Plastic and Microplastic in our L.I. Sound" – April 7 from 2:30 – 4:30 pm at the Library's Cole Auditorium. Rutherford stated this program would be the official kick-off of the Earth Day Month celebration with Peter Tesei reading the proclamation.
  - (2) Earth Day event at Old Greenwich School – April 29<sup>th</sup>: Moch stated this program will be a celebration of the newly approved plastic bag ordinance. This educational event would encourage students to use reusable bags by

making their own from the recycled t-shirts. More than 20 volunteers will help with the program including the members of BYO Greenwich, PTA and Conservation Commission.

- (3) Rain Gardens at North Mianus and Riverside Schools – April 10<sup>th</sup>: Moch reported the Aquarion Water Company staff volunteered for the excavations, engineering plans were prepared pro bono by Rocco V. D’Andrea, Inc., and plants were secured by the Garden Education with generous donation of Aquarion Water Company and Jane Dunn, Greenwich Garden Club. After all these efforts, the planning phase ran out of time before an approval from Parks and Recreation could be obtained. The project may be reconsidered for late August.

- *Pollinator Highways* and *Seed to Seed* programs initiated by Greenwich Land Trust: Moch reported that since the idea of building Pollinator Highways has started, the staff met with the Greenwich Land Trust and Green School Committee. The plan is to utilize the vegetable gardens at schools during the summer break to grow native flowers and use them for restoring the connections between the natural areas along the roads. Henrey and Dickinson will meet with Wilton Garden Club, which runs a very similar program, to learn from their experience.

Steve Conaway, PhD, Conservation & Outreach Director, Greenwich Land Trust will be speaking at the next Conservation Commission meeting about *Seed to Seed* program.

- Soil Health/Compost program
    - (1) Composting at schools – progress report: Moch stated the film “Wasted! The Story of Food Waste” will provide an introduction and inspiration to composting and recycling at Greenwich High School cafeteria. The program will be implemented on April 26<sup>th</sup>.
- d) Current Environmental legislation: Rutherford explained this list was provided for informational purposes for the members to explore, but not necessarily be discussed at the meeting

## 6) Committee and Liaison Reports

- a) Sustainable Greenwich Committee: Searle stated the staff is working on more detailed plan.
- b) Green School Committee: Moch stated John Hopkins, Board of Education agreed to the proposed replacement of the Styrofoam trays currently used at school cafeterias with reusable plastic baskets. A pilot program will be run this year at Cos Cob School. In addition, several schools joined the tray-less Tuesday where food would be served in compostable paper boats. These efforts are directed towards waste reduction and long-term money savings for the schools.

c) Energy Committee

- Strategic Energy Plan for Greenwich: Searle reported the committee met in March to develop a plan of action. The new plan will include some educational programs. The town hall audit is due to be submitted later in May. The plan will be further discussed over the weekly phone calls with *Eversource* on Monday mornings.
- Bright Idea Grant - \$15,000 awarded: Nahabedian stated the grant will be used to improve the energy efficiencies in the areas identified by the audit of the Town-owned buildings.
- Community Energy Planning: was not discussed

- d) Parks and Recreation Board: Baker reported the columns of the Lia Fail Way amphitheater will be relocated to Montgomery Pinetum Park. It was also reported the proposed artificial turf installation at middle schools is meeting a strong opposition from the public.

The Bruce Museum is pursuing a major capital improvement project. Members questioned why this was not brought before this commission, to which Rutherford responded the staff reviewed the project and commented on its merit.

The new Greenwich Point Master Plan was discussed. The Commission members requested the plan be presented to them as well.

- e) Greenwich Recycling Advisory Board: Dickinson reported the last meeting took place on January 18<sup>th</sup>. The main item discussed was the decreasing demand from China for recyclable material, which could trigger some changes to what is being recycled in Greenwich. *City Carting and Recycling* in Stamford has been accepting several more items than the State mandates. Collins stated there is a local market for these items. The new state guidelines “What’s In and What’s Out” is more limited in terms of the variety, especially in the area of plastic.

The next Household Hazardous Waste Day was scheduled for May 5<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Island Beach parking area.

The paper shredding event will take place on April 21, 2018 from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm at the Island Beach Parking lot.

- f) Harbor Management Commission: Baker reported a crane fell off a barge into the water at Greenwich Point on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The 26-foot Bayliner that sunk near the Four Foot Rock off Captain's Island, has been removed. This ship wreck had caused navigational hazard for many years.

Baker stated the depth of the dredging of Indian Harbor was decreased to 10 feet which would generate less dredge spoil to dispose.

Plans to dredge Greenwich Harbor are moving forward with modifications. The depth of dredging has been reduced in designated areas, leading to a 50% reduction in the volume of spoils. Silberberg expressed dissatisfaction with the plan, but did not suggest the commission respond to his position.

## **7) Old Business**

- a) Waste Ordinance: Moch reported adoption of the proposed fracking waste ordinance by the RTM was delayed to the June 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- b) Plastic Bag Ban: Searle reported the proposed ordinance passed at the March 12<sup>th</sup> RTM meeting. Although the final language of the ordinance has not yet been released, the ordinance will make the Conservation Commission responsible for its enforcement. A committee consisting of BYO, Searle, Dickinson, Sesto, and Moch was formed to work on details.
- c) Mylar balloon – status: Silberberg reported he was a guest of Fred Camillo’s radio talk show twice, which led to new connections with other important organizations.

## **8) New Business**

The issue of the stand of Japanese knotweed in proximity to the rotary on Sound Beach Avenue was raised. Eradication of this cluster should be incorporated into the plans to rework the rotary.

SB427 was briefly discussed, noting the importance of keeping groundwater within the public trust. Staff was directed to submit comments on behalf of the commission.

Rutherford requested the July 5<sup>th</sup> meeting be rescheduled to July 12<sup>th</sup>, which works better with the holiday on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Further, the meeting should be held at the Cottage.

## **9) Adjournment**

Motion was made by Silberberg and seconded by Baker to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Submitted by,

Aleksandra Moch  
Environmental Analyst