

**Conservation Commission Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
May 2, 2019**

Minutes

Attendance:

Members present: Eric Brower, Lisette Henrey, Nancy Dickinson, Gary Silberberg, Ted Walworth (arrived 7:07 p.m.), and Laura di Bonaventura (arrived at 7:28 p.m.)

Staff present: Patricia Sesto and Sarah Cocco

Audience Present: Renee Seblatnigg

Commission Discussion Session – 7:00 p.m.

Meeting called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Vice Chairman Brower

- 1) **Seating of Alternates:** No alternatives were seated.
- 2) **Review and approval of draft minutes of March 7, 2019 meeting:** A motion was made by Silberberg and seconded by Dickinson to approve the minutes as corrected.
- 3) **Review of Correspondence:** Two issues of *Connecticut Wildlife* were distributed to the Conservation Commission members.

Sesto shared written comments by Moch made to the Planning and Zoning Department. Sesto pointed out the Calabrese property comments, as there are violations from both IWWA and from an Open Space prospective. Sesto explained the issue at hand, the legal argument, and what the next steps were. Discussion ensued.

Sesto also shared a letter from the Commission supporting legislation (House Bills 1003, 5384, 5385, and 7294) to ban the use of single-use plastic.

- 4) **Chairman's Report:** In Rutherford's absence, Sesto reported that the Environmental Affairs Department is now fully staffed. There is a new Assistant Compliance Officer, Jennifer Urena, and Applications Coordinator, Peter Mangs.

5) Presentations:

- a) **Scenic Roads – Historic Preservation Network**

Dickinson introduced Renee Seblatnigg and the Greenwich Preservation Network. The Historic Preservation Network, HPN, is a sub-committee of the Greenwich Preservation Network.

Seblatnigg pointed Commissioners to Chapter 2, Scenic and Historic Resources, in the 2009 POCD, which explicitly mentions scenic roads. The Chapter mentions “action items”, but Seblatnigg explains that these were aspirational and nothing has been done since it was written. The Town has five scenic roads: Cliffdale Road, Burying Hill Road, Selden Lane, Buckfield Lane, and Sawmill Lane.

Seblatnigg asked the Commissioners what they (as the Conservation Commission) feel about scenic roads in Town? Discussion ensued around the Town ordinance vs. the State of Connecticut’s ordinance for scenic roads. Silberberg stated that the Commission included preserving scenic roads in the 2019 goals, yet there are some concerns with obtaining agreement from property owners of at least 51% of the frontage. He recommended Dingtown Road, but acknowledged the effort needed to speak with all the neighbors.

Walworth distributed the Spring 2019 Northeast Greenwich Newsletter from the Northeast Greenwich Association, Inc. and pointed out Sesto’s Caboodle article (page 5), street signage (page 7), and Seblantnigg’s scenic road article (page 8).

Laura di Bonaventura arrived at 7:28 p.m.

Discussion ensued concerning specific definitions and language of state and local scenic road ordinances. Silberberg asked about the proximity of off-split roads to a scenic road, if these roads could be included in a designation, and what the minimum length of a scenic road could be. Sesto explained the minimum length is one-half (1/2) mile.

Sesto asked if Seblantnigg’s group was interested in going out to do the legwork with neighborhoods. Seblantnigg stated that they were not, but willing to help with the structure of a committee to do this work.

Di Bonaventura asked the Commissioners if there are points of view that oppose scenic roads? Brower and Sesto explained there is a common misperception that a designation of a scenic road can be detrimental to your property rights. Henry inquired what the advantages are of a scenic road designation? Brower stated one incentive is that it prevents DPW from putting up certain features on the street, like guard rails.

Walworth spoke to Seblantnigg that the Commission is in favor of scenic roads.

Di Bonaventura asked if sidewalks could be included in part of a scenic road. She stated that students at her school have asked since most are driven to school. Sesto explained the process for Planning and Zoning to hold a public hearing period

around a scenic road designation. Silberberg asked if a scenic road would increase a home's value. Sesto does not believe it would.

Brower went on to explain the efforts behind getting a scenic road designation. Seblantigg expressed concerns with the scenic road designation form, it's hard to find on the Town website and is confusing. Sesto said she would correct the form to be less confusing and easier to find.

Walworth believes scenic roads are a benefit to the town and neighborhoods and that the Commission supports efforts by the community to develop scenic road ideas. Di Bonaventura added that the Commission discussed and acknowledged the points of view of those who may grieve this issue.

Seblantigg asked for clarification of the Commission's involvement. Di Bonaventura recommended getting neighborhood associations together to make a task force to identify scenic roads. Seblantigg believes a central group needs to exist. Sesto offered to assist Seblantigg and her group with organizing and understanding the ordinances.

Brower said the Commission will articulate a statement and send to the HPN. Seblantigg thanks the Commission for their time and allowing her to speak with them about scenic roads.

Seblantigg left the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

6) Staff Reports

A detailed report for the topics below was prepared by Moch/Coccaro and forwarded to the Conservation Commission members. The report included:

a) Conference/Program Reminders:

- Mianus River Fishway Annual Open House, Saturday, May 4th 11am-1pm, rain date is Sunday, May 5th, 11am-1pm
- Long Island Sound Blue Plan Public Meeting, Thursday, May 9th 7:00 pm at the Darien Library, 1441 Post Rd, Darien
- Horseshoe crab monitoring dates: May 16, 18, 20, June 1, 3, 5, 15, 17, 19, 30, July 2, 4.
- Climate Change Workshop, Part 2, on June 6th, 2019 8am-1:30pm at Westchester County Center, White Plains.

Sesto highlighted the recent Arbor Day ceremony and proclamation at Cos Cob Elementary School. The Town received a Red Oak from Sustainable CT as part of our certification as a Silver-status town, which was planted at the school. This was a collaborative event between the Greenwich Tree Conservancy, new Superintendent of Parks and trees, Dr. Gregory Kramer, and the Conservation Commission. Sesto has

recently been working closely with the Greenwich Tree Conservancy, Tree Department and DWP.

Sesto spoke at the annual Cos Cob Town Meeting, which brought together a panel of local environmentalists to discuss environmental issues.

The Committee inquired about horseshoe crab tagging and counts this year. Coccoaro is waiting for tags and the tagging kit from Project Limulus. She will advertise dates for volunteers once we know how many tags we have this year.

Silberberg recommended Commissioners look at the LIS Blue Plan. Sesto asked Commissioners to send her comments so she can consolidate and send in combined comments from the Commission.

Brower mentioned a recent New York Times article on dendrochronology being used to look at historic climate trends.

b) Fisheries/Wildlife

c) Education/ Outreach:

- Pollinator Pathway initiatives
- Green School Committee
- Skip the Straw
- UConn/Greenwich Partnership
- Waste Reduction Program
- *Phragmites* removal at Bruce Park – Parks and Recreation

Brower asked why the application was denied. The proposed deep excavation of the root system had raised a concern of bank instability along the pond edges. CT DEEP recommended chemical treatment over the mechanical removal. Sesto explained that Rodeo is commonly used as aquatic version of Roundup.

7) New initiatives:

- a) SLR RFP – update: Sesto reported that the RFP has been issued and the period of submitting clarifying questions has closed. The Commission received nine proposals for SLR projects, for both phase 1 and 2. The nine will be whittled down to top four. Sesto submitted the score sheets to the finance department, who will tally up and send back to the Commission.

Silberberg asked about the causeway replacement proposal at Greenwich Point. Sesto explained her discussion with Parks and Recreation and Planning and Zoning. The proposal is moving forward without accounting for sea level rise for two reasons: 1. The amount of excess grading to account for the elevated road, and 2. The funding has been secured for the original project proposal. Modifications would not be covered.

8) Committee and Liaison Reports

- a) Energy Committee: Sesto stated that the Committee has set a goal of the end of May to have the Strategic Energy Plan completed. The idea is to have the plan ready to be voted on by the Commission at the June meeting. Di Bonaventura asked if Sesto could highlight the main recommendations in the report. Sesto explained that the Town needs to define what our role is with educating the public on energy use and reduction. Sesto would also like to see how the town is managing its use of energy within municipal buildings. Due to the complexity of the energy management, we really need to have an energy commission/committee to take this on. Silberberg commented that he thought the energy event was really well done. Sesto explained that we tried to leave out the Conservation Commission so attendees would not associate energy conservation with conservation solely. Sesto reiterated that from the recent presentation there are little changes that we can do to change 20% energy, which can be carried throughout town.

Di Bonaventura inquired how future members will be selected. Sesto believes the Conservation Commission will recommend expertise to be include, but most likely go through the Office of the First Selectmen.

Silberberg asked that in the short term, if we can select an energy provider for a lower cost? Sesto said she would inquire with finance.

- b) Parks and Recreation Board: Baker was not present at the time to report.
- c) Greenwich Recycling Advisory Board (GRAB): Dickinson reported Hazardous Waste Day is May 11th. Unused medicines can be brought to any Police Station for disposal. Four bills coming up in the State Legislature (House Bills mentioned earlier by Sesto) are also being supported by GRAB.

GRAB is tackling the use of plastic dry cleaning bags. Residents are encouraged to bring their own, or to refuse the plastic covers. Greenwich Public Schools are examining a new food service provider, the Green Schools committee is again focusing on a safer, eco-friendly replacement for the Styrofoam trays and the possibility of dishwashing systems.

Dickinson thanked Sesto for speaking at the recent Board of Education meeting on behalf of the Commission.

Dickinson also reported on the recent CT DEEP webinar on textiles for reuse and recycling. Manchester, CT has a bi-weekly textile curbside pickup with Simple Recycling and transfer station collection. Dickinson stated that the average American throws away 81 lbs. of clothing per year. Only 15% of textiles are recycled. Of the recycled textiles, 45% is usable clothing, 20% fiber reconversion,

and 30% wiping cloth grade. Dickinson highlighted three local programs in Greenwich, which have diverted over a million pounds of textiles from our waste stream.

- d) New Harbor Management Commission- Baker was not present at the time to report. Sesto reported the installation of a new acting Chairman, Mike Van Oss.

9) Old Business

- a) High Water Marker at the Holly Grove, Greenwich Point: Brower is working to contact Rocco V. D'Andrea, Inc. on the status of new elevations for each marker. Di Bonaventura asked where the markers are located in Town. Brower stated the four locations: Byram beach, the ferry boat landing, Holly Grove at Greenwich Point, Cos Cob Marina River Park.
- b) Mylar balloon – Silberberg reported efforts to change the language to ban the sale and outdoor display of all outdoor balloons.

10) New Business – no new business.

11) Adjournment: Motion was made by Walworth, and seconded by Dickinson, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Submitted by,

Sarah Coccaro
Conservation Resource Manager