



TOWN OF GREENWICH

Town Hall • 101 Field Point Road • Greenwich, CT 06830

Conservation Commission
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Minutes May 3, 2018

Members present: William Rutherford, Chairman, Eric Brower, Vice-Chairman, Sue Baker (arrived 8:10 pm), Lisette Henrey, Urling Searle, Nancy Dickinson, Theodore Walworth (arrived at 7:12 pm), and Skip Parker.

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

Audience Present: Kim Gregory, Greenwich Garden Club, and Steve Conaway, PhD, Conservation & Outreach Director at Greenwich Land Trust

1) **Call to Order**

Bill Rutherford called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2) **Seating of Alternates**

Skip Parker was seated for Gary Silberberg.

3) **Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Brower and seconded by Dickinson to approve minutes for April 5, 2018, as presented. The motion passed 7-0-0.

4) **Review of Correspondence**

No correspondence

5) **Chairman's Report**

a) **Plan of Conservation and Development**

Rutherford announced all members are invited to a meeting with P&Z on May 18th at 11:00 am. The meeting will focus on conservation in the new POCD. Commissioners should RSVP to Patricia Sesto.

A day before, on May 17th at 7:00 pm, there will be another meeting on POCD tackling the general issues and is open to the public.

b) Tree Conservancy

Rutherford attended the Tree Conservancy event on April 27th. He was pleased to hear the emphasis of this organization will be on planting trees around public parking areas. Brower stated these areas have been long lacking proper mitigation. Trees were originally planted as part of regulatory approvals, but then die over time and are not replaced. Rutherford added the Horseneck Brook parking area will be the first target of the program.

c) GHS AP Course

Rutherford met Dr. Jill Gildea at the event. She told him that a new AP conservation class will be offered at the Greenwich High School next year.

d) Invasive Species Management Planning

Rutherford jointly with Sarah Nahabedian, and Tree Warden Bruce Spaman signed for an invasive species workshop offered by the CT DEEP on June 12th.

Spaman has been supportive of managing invasive species, but has not had the funds. Rutherford discussed this need, urging members to be aware of public-private partnerships to further the commission's goals. Sesto will convey to IWWA Compliance Officer Doreen Carroll-Andrews Rutherford's interest in seeing the invasive project she has been working on.

With time remaining before the 7:30 p.m. presentation, Rutherford took the agenda out of order.

7) Staff Reports

a) Department Consolidation

Rutherford was pleased with the departmental consolidation efforts and Sesto's leadership. Sesto reported on her meetings with former director Denise Savageau, noting she has received a lot of help and support. Her time has taken over the strategic energy plan and launching plastic bag ordinance.

Sesto reported on opportunities for CC and IWWA staff member to work together. Staff have assisted each other on egg oiling, invasive management projects, among others. The administrative staff has taken on appropriate tasks, allowing CC staff to spend more time on technical work. Sesto reported spending more time on conservation issues, which, when

reported to the IWWA, no discontent was voiced. The expectation is there will be a shifting of her time reflective of the workloads of each agency.

b) Water supply

Sesto stated she is meeting with Denise Savageau and Caroline Baisley to get up to speed on the water supply issues. She will discuss the need and means to notifying property owners on wells regarding two-times a week irrigation restrictions. Moch stated had only one request for variance, but a lot of questions regarding the irrigation practices.

Discussion ensued regarding groundwater recharge, soil conditions, and stormwater management. Sesto stated an intern from Yale University is researching proper soil mixes for rain gardens and anticipates these will be incorporated into the revised Drainage Manual. Scott Marucci and DPW as a whole, have been receptive to changes to reflect the IWWA goals. Additionally, the IWWA includes a standard condition in their permits requiring proper soil amendment and use of compost to restore soils compacted during the site development.

Lisette Henrey expressed concern about excessive tree removal from the upland areas in Greenwich. Brower suggested an educational program to spread the awareness about their beauty and importance.

5) Presentation: *Seed to Seed* Greenwich Land Trust

Greenwich Land Trust Conservation Outreach Director, Steve Conway presented the new program, called Seed to Seed. The goal of the program is to restore the natural areas with native species in recognition of the superior role they play in their specific ecoregion. This program is based on three pillars: conservation, education, and propagation. Dr. Conway indicated there is an increase in volunteers and partnerships, with the Community Gardens and Green School Committee as two major partners. Participation by the Town of Greenwich was welcomed, too.

The current efforts of the program are to build capacity to meet the native plant demand for the two ecoregions of Greenwich. These species are easier to grow and are disease and insect resistant. Dr. Conway noted the targeted native plants usually have “weed” in their name, e.g. ironweed, milkweed, butterfly weed. This is a cultural recognition of their tenacity. To help meet demand, the program is partnering with area nurseries.

Education is accomplished with various school groups, the GLT Youth Corps, and regional skill sharing.

Conservation of seeds is accomplished by identifying key habitats and plant populations. Of note, the rare purple milkweed has been identified in Greenwich. Some seeds collected will be made part of the national seedbank collaboration. The majority of the collected seeds will be propagated and used restore land trust preserves.

After his presentation, Conway responded to questions, which gave him the opportunity to describe the American Chestnut restoration project and give instructions on how to replace lawn with a successful meadow environment.

The Conservation Commission was invited to combine their June meeting with the Pollinator Potluck held at the Greenwich Land Trust on June 7th and organized by Kim Gregory of the Greenwich Garden Club. It was the consensus of the members to accept the invitation.

6) Staff Reports

Chairman Rutherford resumed discussion points as outlined on the agenda.

c) Fisheries/Wildlife and Education/ Outreach

In light of the presentation planned, staff prepared written reports which were distributed prior to the meeting. The Commission was pleased with colorful graphs provided by Nahabedian and expressed their desire to have written reports for future meetings. Sesto clarified the reports are meant to convey routine work of their staff. Topics will be discussed as needed to provide additional background and/or ascertain direction or approvals from the commission.

Several questions were asked about the fish population, as the graph seems to indicate a multi-year decline. Nahabedian stated there could be many different reasons, some indicative of an actual decline and others simply a function of data collection. The number of blueback herring was low because the fish have just started their run and the count is expected to increase over time.

Nahabedian described the means by which ten fish are sacrificed to examine the color of their stomach lining. This is the only way to differentiate between alewives and blueback herring. The percentage of these fish within the sample is used to extrapolate the relative numbers of alewives and herring in the total fish count.

Sesto pointed out the schedule for the upcoming horseshoe crab monitoring program. Members who can participate should contact Nahabedian.

Chairman Rutherford left the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

7) Committee and Liaison Report

a) Cemetery Committee:

Brower stated the case is still in court, but there is some hope for a settlement in the near future.

b) Sustainable Greenwich Committee:

There have been no meetings since the last commission meeting, but staff continue working on collecting information.

c) Energy Committee

Strategic Energy Plan for Greenwich: Searle reported the committee has been reactivated, meeting twice a month, and efforts are underway to broaden the stakeholders represented on the committee. There is a plan to provide an educational program for the community of building managers in fall. The level II energy evaluation for the Town Hall is expected in mid-May. Greenwich High School would be the next facility evaluated.

d) Parks and Recreation Board

Baker reported the Greenwich Point Master Plan drafted by *Stantec* is troubling. At the meeting Tom Greco presented a project summary containing tables and maps which was difficult to understand. Two board members Gary Dell'Abate and Scott Johnson felt that further meeting on the plan is needed.

Baker was pleased to report that the golf courses will be maintained pesticide-free this year.

e) Greenwich Recycling Advisory Board

Nancy Dickinson reported the paper shredding event on April 21st was very successful. Nine point four (9.4) tons of paper was shredded. Not as much as previous year, which most likely was due to better sorting of recyclable material. The profit of \$1,638 was split between GRAB and GG&C.

Dickinson conveyed information pertaining to Patrick Collins' discussion of the new list of recyclables in town for the fall of 2018. It is longer than the state's list, but shorter than it used to be. Items such as plastic bags, styrofoam trays, and shredded paper would not be allowed in single stream recycling. Dickinson stated 21% of waste is comprised of food, which could be composted. Curbside Compost is the only company which picks up compost in town. Dickinson will circulate this company's contact information.

Moch stated the Central Middle School has initiated a pilot program which replaced styrofoam trays with reusable plastic baskets. This change reduced the waste by 25%. In addition, the students were trained to separate recyclable material, compost, liquid, trash and leave unwanted food on the tray to be shared with others.

f) Harbor Management Commission

Baker was pleased with the tone of the last meeting. Ed Stillwagon of Atlantic Clam Farms will install kelp farm in Payea Reach — southeast of Great Captains Island and southwest of Island Beach. The kelp will be used for human consumption and other commercial uses. The first harvest is planned in April.

Seaweed farming was a topic of 60 Minutes on April 29th. Charles Yarish, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, was profiled and discussed seaweed farming as an important solution to water quality in Long Island Sound.

7) Old Business

a) Waste Ordinance

Henry reported on the May 2nd RTM hearing on fracking wastes. There were a few in opposition, but the majority supported the ordinance. The main concerns were fear of soil

contamination, remediation costs, storm water pollution, and high salinity runoff draining to Long Island Sound and harming the shellfish beds. The ordinance will be presented again to RTM on the upcoming meeting in June.

b) Mylar balloon – status: was not discussed

8) New Business: Henrey reported on a meeting held between Searle, Dickinson, Kim Gregory, herself, Jackie Algon of the Wilton Garden Club in Wilton on April 17th. The group's mission is to spread awareness of the importance of native plants and restore natural connections for pollinators. The project is called Pollinator Pathways.

9) Adjournment: At 9:05 p.m., a Motion was made by Henrey, seconded by Parker to adjourn. The motion carried

Submitted by,

Aleksandra Moch
Environmental Analyst