

**Conservation Commission Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
May 4, 2017**

Minutes

Attendance:

Members present: William Rutherford, Lisette Henrey, Urling Searle, Sue Baker, Gary Silberberg, Eric Brower, Skip Parker and Theodore Walworth III

Staff present: Aleksandra Moch and Sarah Nahabedian

Audience Present: Marija Mikolajczak, Greenwich Conservation Advocates (GCA); John Nelson; Richard J. Margenot, RTM; Jane Kochersperger, GCA; James Webster, GCA; Joan Carr; James Carr, Greenwich Land Trust & RTM; Claire Werner, “Bag It”; Jay Loudon GCA; Mary S. Marks, “Bag It”; Robert Frangione, Frangione Engineering, LLC; Hollace Shantz; Karen Dewane, “Bag It”; Meline Dickson, “Bag It”; Carolyn Dewing-Hommes, “Bag It”; Thomas Heagney, Heagney, Lennon & Slane, LLP.

Commission Discussion Session – 7:00 p.m.

Meeting called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Rutherford

1. **Seating of Alternates:** Walworth was seated for Dickinson
2. **Review and approval of minutes** for April 6, 2017 regular meeting: A motion was made by Silberberg and seconded by Baker to approve the minutes with the following corrections: under section 8ai, add a letter will be sent to the RTM.
3. **Review of Correspondence:** no correspondence
4. **Chairman’s Report:** Rutherford welcomed Sarah Nahabedian, the new Conservation Resource Manager I. Nahabedian introduced herself and spoke about her extensive experience in environmental field. She graduated from Roger Williams University with BA in marine biology and foreign languages followed with MA from Flinders University where she studied marine archeology. Her work experience includes marine science educator, archeologist, research and chemistry lab assistant, and dive coordinator for the Maritime Aquarion. Rutherford reported that he attended a meeting with the First Selectman Tesei and the irrigation contractors to discuss the new water restrictions. Rutherford proudly announced that Conservation Commission had the strongest representation at the last Selectmen’s Nomination Advisory Committee (SNAC) meeting.
5. **Staff Report**
 - a. **Administration - Budget and Planning:** Rutherford reported that as part of the annual RTM Land Use Committee budget review questions were raised about the Open Space Plan and the need for RTM approval. Rutherford assured the chairman that the Commission would do whatever the law department determined was legally required. Savageau and Baker attended the budget meeting and spoke about the need of upgrading the part-time position of the Conservation Resource Manager I to full- time and the importance of the Conservation Commission’s work.

b. Water supply

- i. **Update on drought conditions/water restrictions:** Moch stated that the Board of Selectmen met on April 27, 2017. At that meeting, the existing outdoor water restrictions were replaced with two-day per week water restrictions for the overhead sprinkler irrigation systems which starting on May 1, 2017. Watering variances will be needed for installation of new lawn and landscaping at the construction sites if they need to water outside of this schedule.
- ii. Water conservation outreach/education: was not discussed

c. Long Island Sound/Watershed Management

- i. **UConn/Greenwich initiative** – Bio-blitz - Sept 15/16: was not discussed

d. Sustainable CT Program: was not discussed

e. Wildlife Resources

- i. **Fishway:** Nahabedian reported that about 15,000 fish passed through the fishway so far this year. The number is slightly higher comparing to 12,000 fish last year. On May 2, 2017 at night, she observed the passage filled with fish. The Open House was held on April 30. The monitoring program is doing very well, thanks to all volunteers.
- ii. **Geese Management:** Nahabedian thanked the commission members who helped with egg oiling. The area covered included: Great Captain's Island, Rat Island, and the edges of Mill Pond and Mianus River. Overall, 97 eggs were oiled this year.
- iii. **Horseshoe Crab Survey:** Nahabedian stated that this program will run in May-June.
- iv. **Great Captain's Island:** Nahabedian reported that there is a need for new signs and beach cleanup.

6. New Business

- a. **Ban on Plastic Bags:** M. Dickson presented the necessity for the ban. She noticed that Westport is the only town in Connecticut which banned the use of plastic bags. On Westchester side of the border, a similar ordinance was adopted by Mamaroneck and Rye. She spoke about the use of plastic bags, the extremely long time needed for their decomposition and the environmental damage they cause if not properly disposed. So far, the group collected 180 signatures from individuals who support the ban. Werner explained difference in composition of different plastic bags. Dewane read the Westport's ordinance. Baker made a motion seconded by Searle to endorse the efforts of the "Bag It" group in creating the ordinance. Motion carried unanimously.
- b. **500 Lake Avenue – New Application to Planning and Zoning:** Heagney presented the revised planting plan demonstrating how the added ground cover would benefit the environment. Frangione covered the steep slope and drainage issues in the area of the new access driveway. He also explained the reasons why the access from Lake Avenue cannot be used to support three lots. He mentioned that the only difference between the previous proposal and the revised one, is the smaller sizes of the residences and more intensive planting plan.

Shantz residing at 26 Round Hill Road was concerned that the new access would cause severe impact on the natural environment in terms of increased storm water runoff and habitat fragmentation. Nelson residing at 30 Round Hill Road worried about potential flooding, light illumination impacting the natural areas and challenging drive facing direct sunlight in the

morning. Carr identified himself as a professional biologist and a member of Land Trust. He was concerned that the project, especially the new driveway would have negative effect on Land Trust property. The described impacts included: increase velocities in stream flow, soil erosion, degradation of storm water quality, loss of mature trees which have adjusted to the steep slope and shallow ledge and loss of biological functions provided by this forested area.

Rutherford expanded on the difficulties of planting of new trees and shrubs over the steep slope and shallow soil and potential need for blasting. Brower emphasized that the conservation zone may not be the most important issue here, but the reforestation and maintaining the existing wooded areas. Henrey stated that preserving the natural connections between the protected areas is the priority. After a thorough discussion a motion was made by Brower and seconded by Henrey to recommend denial of this application as presented and did not see any substantial differences between the application that was denied by P&Z and this new application. A prudent and feasible alternative design exists that includes access for the proposed lots off of Lake Ave. Although the Commission supports Conservation Zoning and the role of open space in protecting watersheds, the Commission strongly stated that access off of Lake Ave could also be accomplished without a Conservation Zone subdivision. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Committee and Liaison Reports

- a. **Parks and Recreation Board:** Baker reported that Grass Island facility project is under way. The new structure will replace the old building housing bathrooms and locker rooms. The dredging of the inlets at Greenwich Point has been completed. An application will be filed with CT DEEP to repair the causeway between Eagle Pond and the Cove and install guard-rails on both sides. Stantec was selected to prepare a Master Plan for Greenwich Point. This plan will provide recommendations for park improvements. If the funding is approved the dredging at Binney Park will start in second week of July. A new nonprofit group held a “Spring Spruce up” at the Grass Island dog park. They are also going to do some clean up and plantings. There was a lot of interest in dogs’ presence in parks during the last winter. There were complaints and concerns that dog owners were not being sensitive to other users, and the use of public parks by commercial dog walking operations. In light of these issues and complaints, the dialog about extending the dog session got even tougher to carry.
- b. **GRAB** (Greenwich Recycling Advisory Board): there was no meeting
- c. **Education/Outreach**
 - i. Earth Day Month: Moch reported that the month was very busy. The Conservation Commission Staff provided a full day of learning about soil and compost at Central Middle School on April 20th. On April 21st the staff supported an educational event at Cos Cob Library. A soil display in a tent was used to allow visitors to interact with the exhibit and touch different soil particles. On April 22nd, Conservation Commission hosted Light Bulb Switch event. The program was enhanced with soil tent and compost information booth. Free composters were offered for the Greenwich residents. On April 23, at Bruce Museum an interactive ground water display accompanied by educational activities was presented to the visitors. On April 24 most of the Conservation Commission members and staff together with the school’s PTA parents engaged students in a learning experience through the journey of a rain drop and exploration of different environments the rain drop traveled through in its way to complete the water cycle.

- ii. Leaf recycling program/Safe Lawns: Moch provided a compost presentation at the King Merritt Association meeting on April 26th. She stated that May 3rd and May 10th were designated for pick-up of the free composters at North Street Station.
 - iii. Experience the Sound – June 25th: was not discussed
 - d. **Harbor Management Commission:** Baker reported that a meeting took place between the commission representatives and CT DEEP. After a long discussion an agreement was made on some of the most controversial jurisdictional issues. The report is being revised to reflect the agreed upon changes.
 - e. **Cemetery Committee:** there was no meeting
 - f. **Energy Committee**
 - i. **Substation update:** Searle reported that the project is back and the Town will work with Eversource to accommodate placing the cables underneath the existing roads to minimize the environmental damage to the Bruce Park.
 - ii. **Community Energy Planning:** was not discussed
8. Old Business: was not discussed
9. Adjournment

A motion was made by Silberberg and seconded by Walworth to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

Aleksandra Moch
Environmental Analyst