

Conservation Commission Meeting

via a Zoom virtual meeting.

May 6, 2021

Minutes

Attendance:

Members present: William Rutherford, Eric Brower, Nancy S. Dickinson, Sue Baker, Lisette Henrey, Laura di Bonaventura, Gary Silberberg, and Urling Searle.

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

Audience Present: Paul Hearn

Commission Discussion Session – 7:00 p.m.

1) Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm by Rutherford

2) Seating of Alternates: n/a

3) Review and approve minutes of April 1, 2021: Motion was made by Dickinson and seconded by Henrey to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion passed unanimously.

4) Review of Correspondence: no correspondence.

5) Chairman's Report: Rutherford asked the members who are up for reappointment whether or not they had heard from the first selectman. Baker and Silberberg were contacted. The other three have been not reached yet. Sesto had emailed Mr. Camillo to request an appointment for Bill and her, but so far have not received a response.

6) Conference/Program Reminders

- Greenwich Botanical Center – May 5 @ 10 am. Water Sustainability with Patricia Sesto. Searle and Dickinson offered positive responses to Sesto's presentation.
- Sea Level Rise Report public meetings – June 9 and 16 @ 7 pm
Sesto stated the first meeting will include a primer on sea level rise and discuss the finding of the towns four tidal ponds. The second meeting will analyze the potential impacts on town-owned infrastructure when considering different water levels scenarios. Select department heads will share their observations of sea level rise experienced over the time of their careers and their response to it. In lieu of the contracted third presentation, a story board will be prepared to tell a story of sea level rising in Greenwich. The story board will be posted on the town's website.

Rutherford expressed appreciation for Sesto's hard work on this project.

7) Ongoing projects

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

a) Pollinator Pathway

Moch stated the North Street project is going to be completed this year. The final touches will be applied in spring to officially open this area to pollinators and visitors during International Pollinator Week of June 21-27.

b) Flood elevation posts

Brower is looking to purchase the PVS posts to move this project towards completion. Thus far he has been unable to find the right material.

c) Transportation and Air Quality subcommittee of the Sustainability Committee

Moch reported the group is reaching out to gas station owners to determine the feasibility of installation of EV fast charging stations at the strategic locations in town. A request was made to P&Z to select and approve uniform signage for public EV charging stations.

Pedal Greenwich will work with DPW to organize bike riding events taking advantage of the bridge replacement at Bruce Park and road closing for the through traffic.

9) Fish and Wildlife

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

- a) Fishway: Coccaro reported a very busy wildlife season. When asked about glass eels by di Bonaventura, Coccaro offered a tour of the fish ladder for her and her students.
- b) Horseshoe crabs: Horseshoe crab tagging will be available this year.
- c) Purple Martins
- d) Osprey
- e) Canada Geese

10) Education/Outreach

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

- a) Sustainable Habitats Using Native Vegetation to Manage Wildlife – Coccaro, April 7th, 2021, Greenwich Botanical Center and Greenwich Grown
- b) Town's Path to a Healthier Planet – Sesto, April 23, 2021, Tri Club Conservation Partnership
- c) Earth Week 2021 – Coccaro/di Bonaventura
Sesto was impressed with the hard work of Coccaro and di Bonaventura, conveying her thoughts on a well prepared and executed school program.

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

Sesto stated Town Planner Katie DeLuca, P&Z Chair Margarita Alban, and Coccaro gave a presentation at the last Sustainability Committee meeting. The focus was on Route 1 soft scape improvements and how they fit into the POCD. Sesto was impressed with P&Z eagerness to adopt sustainability into their regulations. The current proposal is to revise the landscaping requirements to reflect sustainable goals. Brower agreed on the need, stating the old regulations are very outdated and do not apply to the current landscape.

b) Friends of Pinetum, Pomerance, and Tuchman

c) Parks and Rec Board:

Sesto asked about the commission's position on the proposed extension to the dog season at Greenwich Point. After some discussion, the consensus was extending the season to include April will cause wildlife disturbance. If the decision was ultimately to extend the season, the fall extension was less of a concern. Sesto will prepare a memo to reflect this recommendation.

Brower expressed concern about the lack of enforcement of the current rules. Unleashed dogs create a huge problem to wildlife and storm water pollution when not picked up after. Baker was upset about dog refuse bags she finds all over the park.

Baker reported at the last meeting of PRB the focus was on the Dorothy Hamill ice skating rink and funding for the new Eastern Greenwich Civic Center.

d) GRAB:

Dickinson reported over thousand people participated in the Live Like Luke Greenwich Point cleanup. GRAB, Waste Free Greenwich, Greenwich Green and Clean and Greenwich High School had put a lot of efforts to organizing this event. It was a wonderful celebration of life and protection of the coastal habitats.

Dickinson urged the members to check the monthly newsletter drafted by Waste Free Greenwich and subscribe to it. She stated the Hazardous Waste Collection Day was a great success. Brower noticed the Health Department characterized it as being the best yet. di Bonaventura described her disappointing experience and recommended there be accommodations for walk-ins to help alleviate a long wait times, car exhaust, and to serve those who live within walking distance.

e) Harbor Management Commission:

Baker reported moorings were the highlight of the meeting. Parks and Recreation will perform their annual dredging of tidal inlets located within the revetment at Greenwich Point. Wave action during storms push sediment into the inlets blocking the tidal flow from entering the marshes.

f) Open Space Committee:

Sesto will check some items with the Law Department before presenting a parcel list to the Commissioners.

12) Old Business:

- a) Bike study funding request – Sesto/Moch
- b) Sea Level Rise Report – Sesto

Both topics were discussed earlier in the meeting.

13) New Business

Brower asked about trout habitat enhancement project recently submitted to IWWA. Sesto responded this is a private property owner who is proposing improvements to a section of the east branch Byram River.

14) Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:48pm. The next meeting is June 3, 2021.