



**Town of
Greenwich
Conservation Commission**

**Town Hall – 101 Field Point Road - Greenwich, CT 06830
Phone 203-622-6461 Fax 203-622-3795**

*Patricia Sesto
Director of
Environmental Affairs*

**MINUTES
November 3, 2022**

In attendance: William Rutherford, Eric Brower, Gary Silberberg, Sue Baker (joined at 7:31pm), Lisette Henrey, Nancy Dickinson, and Ted Walworth.

Also, in attendance: Patricia Sesto, Director of Environmental Affairs; Aleksandra Moch, Environmental Analyst; Snehal Mhatre, Support Analyst; Matt Popp, Environmental Land Solutions; David Wold; Myra Klockenbrink; Peter Alexander, Landscape Architect; Christina Volkwein; Amy Siebert, Commissioner of Public Works; James Michel, Deputy Commissioner; Renee Seblatnig, Louisa Stone, Janet Stone McGuigan, Selectwoman.

- 1) Call to Order
Chairman Rutherford called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm
- 2) Seating of Alternates
No alternates
- 3) Review and approve minutes: October 6, 2022
Gary Silberberg made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected, seconded by Nancy Dickinson and carried 6-0-0.
- 4) Review of Correspondence
No correspondence
- 5) Chairman's Report
 - a) Staff updates
Bill Rutherford reported on staff hiring process. Two members of IWWA and CC were selected to conduct first round interviews for director's position. The position remains open. Patricia Sesto, director, will select the assistant director with input from the IWWA and CC chairmen. Interviews are scheduled for Wednesday, November 9th.

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November 30th is Ms. Sesto's last day in the office. She will continue supporting the staff until the end of the year in consulting capacity. She will also be available for calls past December.

The long-planned office remodeling will begin on November 14th. The first phase will include demolition of the three offices in the back. Their users will be temporarily relocated into the conference room. A plan was put forward to minimize the disturbance to the office operations and the public.

6) 2023 meeting dates

Bill Rutherford have noticed July 6th being too close to the 4th of July, the date should be pushed to the second week in July. Silberberg had noticed the meetings being scheduled in the Cone Room rather than virtual meeting. Discussion ensued.

Gary Silberberg made a motion to approve the 2023 meeting schedule with the document referencing both in person and virtual options to be determined, and the July meeting being at the Innis Arden Cottage. The date of the July meeting will be revisited closer to the meeting. The motion was seconded by Lisette Henrey and carried.

7) Conference/ Program Reminders:

- The Great Pumpkin Rescue, Saturday, November 12, 1pm-4pm at Cos Cob Train station, organized by Waste Free Greenwich and Conservation Commission.

Aleksandra Moch stated the goal of this event is to divert as many pumpkins as possible from the waste stream. They will be collected during the event and taken to the composting site.

- Hawk Watch Season's-End Gathering & Season Report, Friday, December 02, 2022 6:00pm - 8:00pm at Greenwich Audubon Center
- Native Seeds Part 1: Native Seed Walk, Talk & Collection, Thursday, November 3rd, 1pm - 2 pm, meet at GBC Greenhouse and walk with Andy Chapin

8) Fisheries/Wildlife – Coccaro: no report

- a) Mianus River Fish Ladder
- b) Purple Martins

Bill Rutherford asked about purple martin housing. Pat Sesto responded, they were cleaned and put into the storage shed for winter.

- c) Horseshoe crabs
- d) Bat Monitoring

9) Ongoing projects: a written report was provided to the Commission members by Aleksandra Moch

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- a) Pollinator Pathway: Eric Brower commended the educational program prepared by the group for the Cup Scouts. The seed bomb program was very successful and well attended. Rutherford lauded the removal of most of *Phragmites* from the tidal ponds located at Bruce Park and the large number of students from Greenwich High School and other volunteers participating in the project. He emphasized the importance of site monitoring and persistence in removal of new shoots in spring.

10) Education/Outreach – see Pollinator Pathway

11) Committee and Liaison Reports

a) Sustainability Committee

Patricia Sesto updated the committee on CC staffing and Open Space Plan.

- The Committee is working on a newsletter which should have its first issue released in January. The effort is led by Snehal Mhatre and Myra Klockenbrink.
- Waste Free Greenwich is working with Center for EcoTechnology to provide free technical assistance to local country clubs for a waste reduction pilot program focusing on food and other waste.
- Waste Free Greenwich and CET teamed up to launch the Greenwich Food Matters Challenge. The goal of the challenge was to help local restaurants reduce food waste. The restaurants were encouraged to apply a variety of strategies such as repurposing ingredients, donating surplus meals, composting food scraps, and more. Participating restaurants were able to divert tons of food from the waste stream.

(1) Transportation and Air Quality subcommittee: no report

b) GRAB – Dickinson/Moch

Nancy Dickinson reported further on the six restaurants involved in the Food Rescue Program over the period of 8-10 weeks. It is projected the program will yield 5.6 tons of saved food, 6 tons of food donated, and 13 tons would be composted annually.

Dickinson referenced *The Great Pumpkin Rescue* event urging use of backyard composting, attend the event, or bring the Halloween pumpkins to the Holly Hill for proper disposal.

She went over the food scrap collection sites; reporting the Old Greenwich, Farmers Market site open 12-2pm and Round Hill Church 10-noon.

c) Parks and Rec Board

No report: the meeting was canceled

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d) Harbor Management Commission

Sue Baker reported 5th anniversary was celebrated at the last meeting. The celebration was combined with the business session at Innis Arden Cottage. It was noted all the boats were removed from the moorings. Shellfish Commission will have shellfish demonstration on Saturday, Nov. 5th at 2:30pm at Greenwich Point.

e) Leaf Blower Committee

In the absence of Karen DeWahl, Ms. Sesto reported Quiet Yards Greenwich is working with Ben Branyan, Town Administrator, and her on the new leaf blower ordinance. The ordinance will have to be adopted by the Board of Health as an amendment to the existing noise ordinance. If approved, the CC staff will enforce the new regulations.

Bill Rutherford opened the floor for public comments.

Myra Klockenbrink stated noise from skeet shooting at local clubs is disturbing.

12) Old Business

a) Open Space Plan

Pat Sesto reported the law department determined the Plan needs to be an addendum to POCD. P&Z has already had their public hearing on the Plan and P&Z will bring the Plan to the RTM meeting, with Sesto presenting it. To make it consistent with POCD, guiding principles were added. Other language was added to clarify the need for further study on elements such as the proposed fee in lieu of open space. Sesto stated none of the revisions substantively alter the Plan approved by the Conservation Commission.

Lisette Henrey asked if CC support is needed at the RTM hearings, to which Ms. Sesto stated she will call on members if feedback suggests any issues. She used the example of the recently sold 80 acres of Rockefeller's land as an impetus to implement the Plan swiftly.

Ted Walworth asked if the Rockefellers' representative reached out to any of the non-for-profit organizations. Pat Sesto was not aware of any discussions with the land conservation organizations.

Myra Klockenbrink recommended for every new site improvement, a small fee be collected to support an open space fund. Pat Sesto responded with her understanding that such plan will need enabling legislation.

b) Coastal Resiliency Report

Pat Sesto expressed gratitude to Snehal Mhatre for posting the reports. Some of the revisions to the pond study document were not accepted by the report's author. Eric Brower requested to review the revised draft before posting it. The report will be advertised to the

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public via banner on the main town website and other social media. The upcoming First Selectman newsletter will offer a link to the report. An electronic copy has been forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools.

c) Flood markers

Eric Brower reported not receiving the estimate for the posts. Sue Baker offered to facilitate the communication with Parks and Recreation to expedite the project.

13) New Business

a) Arch Street and Greenwich Avenue reconfiguration –taken out of order

Jim Michel presented the proposed plan approved by RTM, BET, P&Z and other departments. The goal of this improvement is to enhance the visibility, shorten the walking distance across the road, better road alignment between Havemeyer and Arch Streets, and making it handicap accessible. Contrary to what has been stated by others, the affected area is not part of a pocket open space, rather part of the Town's right of way.

Mr. Michel stated there will be a net gain of 2,000 sf of planted space achieved via new islands to be planted and several planters. Ms. Sesto expressed concerned about tree loss and the impact on their root system during the site excavation, to which Mr. Michel responded no trees will be lost or negatively affected.

Bill Rutherford stated his concern about the lack of grading shown on the map. He conveyed the mature European beeches are very sensitive and may not show the impact of the disruption for several years after the site development. Jim Michel responded DPW is working with designers on more detailed plans.

Mr. Rutherford noted the new vegetated area will be split into small sections, which is not as environmentally valuable as the current single large space.

Jim Michel further stated the landscape plan will be designed by the Tree Warden and the Greenscape Committee. The design will be simple using evergreens and salt tolerant species.

Mr. Rutherford called for public comment.

Matt Popp, Landscape Architect, stated he represents a group of concerned community members. He used his exhibits to point out the design deficiencies including the lack of landscape and grading plan and tree preservation plan. He questioned the expertise behind the design and stated the work should have been outsourced to traffic engineers. His stated concerns also included the negative impact on the town character, the historic district, tree

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and urban forest, pedestrian safety, and existing green space. He also pointed out the design elements do not meet the town's standards.

Christina Volkwein, member of RTM, Land Use Committee represented the group which is planning to bring the project back to RTM. She was inspired by the CC effort of working on the tools enabling adding more open space in town. She stated this project will do the opposite: it will decrease the open space.

Ms. Volkwein suggested it is debatable whether the project footprint is in the town's right-of-way, stating more research has been done. Originally the area was donated for education.

The commission's review is informal, so no resolution is needed. However, comments will be provided.

Jim Michel stated the plans lack detail knowingly in order to be fiscally prudent. The process is set up to move from concept plans to final plans while still asking for public input.

The list of conservation issues includes:

- Anticipation grading of the site may have a negative impact on the beech trees, causing injury which may result in their demise several years after the project.
- Loss of open space will impact the street scape, limit the recreational space and biologically active surface of the planted area.
- Loss of land within the Historic District
- Impact on the historic character of the town
- Contiguous open space is more visible and biologically valuable than a fragmented space.
- Existing trees need to be protected to preserve the urban forest

By consensus it was decided the above comments to be forwarded to RTM.

b) Porcelain Berry Management

Gary Silberberg reported putting together a list of places the vine grows. He is also exploring the existing regulations and authorities designated to deal with this issue. He reported Bedford using goats to address the invasion.

Bill Rutherford advised on the most common control methods.

c) FY2023-2024 Budget and Capital Projects

Pat Sesto reported no capital projects are included in this year budget. Last year the Greenwich Point causeway improvement was considered, but in the light of higher priority projects determined by coordination with other departments, it was decided not to include it.

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The cost of a ground penetrating radar survey at Byram Cemetery will be around \$2,000, which is reasonable to include in the budget. Eric Brower supported this idea as helpful to address so many questions about the location of graves and drafting of the future maintenance program. Nancy Dickinson was not sure the survey is needed. She asked what section would be covered. With the expectation that cost will be similar regardless if one or both sections of the cemetery are surveyed, she suggested the upper and lower portions be examined. Ted Walworth expressed his support to the survey. It was decided in the interim, the project will be included in budget and details decided later.

d) Drought status

Pat Sesto reported the water level in reservoirs is 20% below 20-year average. The demand for water had dropped as we are getting into the end of the irrigation season. Precipitation is in the normal range, but we need more to catch up with the summer losses.

Eric Brower asked about the old groundwater monitoring well USGS had installed in 2002. Aleksandra Moch stated the program was discontinued due to the funds running out and the well not yielding reliable data. Pat Sesto reported Sarah Coccaro and she reached out to USGS to ask about the old study being replicated. There was no funding available for resuming the program and problems with data analysis methodology that makes it impossible to actually replicate the last study.

Mr. Brower believed collecting the ground water data is needed to develop a base line. After a brief discussion, it was decided to put this topic on the next agenda for further discussion.

14) Public Comment

Sue Baker requested a Caboodle meeting before Pat Sesto's departure. She also reported Ms. Sesto being a keynote speaker at Greenwich Land Trust annual meeting on November 30th at 8:00pm.

Ted Walworth announced the 96th annual meeting of the Eastern Neighborhood Association scheduled for November 20th. He invited all the CC members and the staff.

15) Adjourn – next meeting is December 1, 2022

At 8:45pm Silberberg made a motion, seconded by Dickinson and carried 7-0-0.

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