



**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
December 1, 2022**

In attendance: William Rutherford, Eric Brower, Gary Silberberg, Sue Baker (joined at 7:08pm), Nancy Dickinson, Ted Walworth, Leslie Petrick, and Karen DeWahl.

Also, in attendance: Sarah Coccaro, Assistant Director of Environmental Affairs; Aleksandra Moch, Environmental Analyst; Snehal Mhatre, Support Analyst; Alex, Burying Ground; Lauren Taylor; Mary Klockenbrink, Sustainability Committee.

1) Call to Order

Chairman Rutherford called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm

2) Seating of Alternates

Leslie Petrick was seated for Lisette Henrey and Karen DeWahl was seated for Sue Baker.

3) Review and approve minutes: November 3, 2022

Nancy Dickinson made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected, seconded by Gary Silberberg and carried 7-0-0.

Sue Baker joined the meeting at 7:08pm

4) Review of Correspondence

No correspondence

5) Chairman's Report

a) Staff updates

Bill Rutherford reported Pat Sesto's official last day was on November 30th. He was excited to announce Sarah Coccaro's promotion to the new Assistant Director position. Pat Sesto will be still assisting remotely with drafting reports and supporting the staff.

Sarah Coccaro stated, the interviews for the newly created Environmental Analyst position were scheduled for Thursday, December 8th. Bill Rutherford explained the old Conservation

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Resource Manager position was eliminated and replaced with another Environmental Analyst. Sarah Coccaro and Pat Sesto will conduct the interviews with HR. There are five candidates being interviewed.

Bill Rutherford was pleased with Pat Sesto's presentation at the Greenwich Land Trust annual meeting. Seven of the CC members and a few of the formal CC members were in attendance. Pat made the open space plan the focus of her keynote message. One of the successful examples of open space protection was the King Street development based on the conservation zone principles. Greenwich Land Trust will oversee this protected area.

Bill Rutherford reported, the Climate Action Plan will be the one of the major projects for the CC to take on next year. This plan will be done by local volunteering professionals and staff, no consultants. The Sustainability Committee is onboard, and the upcoming caboodle meeting will initiate the community interaction with the plan. Gary Silberberg asked if Greenwich Housing Authority will be involved. Bill Rutherford responded the goal is to involve all interested party, especially the Board of Education with their buildings being the most affected by the flooding and heat waves.

6) Conference/ Program Reminders:

- Pathways to Engagement: Funding a Resilient Regional Foodshed, the sixth and last panel of the Greenwich Food System Forum (GFSF), virtually through Zoom, on Wednesday, November 30th, at 7:00pm, speakers; New England and Bay Area based, to register:
<https://thefoodshednetwork.org/greenwich-food-system-forum>
- Native Seeds Part 2: Native Seed Propagation, Thursday, December 1st, 1 - 2 pm, GBC Greenhouse with Andy Chapin.
- Soil Health, Nutrient Density & Regenerative Agriculture in Greenwich, December 14th, 2022, 10 am or 7pm at GBC with Steve and Ingrid McMenemy operate Versailles Farm.
- Accelerating the Transition to Lead-Free Skies, Thursday, December 15th at noon, via Zoom hosted by Quiet Communities, register at
https://bostonu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUlduyrrjMiGtUNPzuwPy3DDsvOY6A-bmW?mc_cid=6411c968cf&mc_eid=4b1e5babbd
- Conservation Caboodle; Thursday, December 20, @ noon, Greenwich Audubon

7) Fisheries/Wildlife – Coccaro: no report

- a) Mianus River Fish Ladder
- b) Purple Martins
- c) Horseshoe crabs
- d) Bat Monitoring

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- 8) Ongoing projects
 - a) Pollinator Pathway: a written report was provided to the Commission members by Aleksandra Moch

- 9) Education/Outreach
 - a) Role of the Conservation Commission in Greenwich – presentation at Parkway School for 3rd graders: a written report was provided to the Commission members by Aleksandra Moch

- 10) Committee and Liaison Reports
 - a) Sustainability Committee: Coccaro reported the meeting took place today (December 1st). The Legislative & Advocacy sector provided a presentation on the upcoming initiatives.

(1) Transportation and Air Quality subcommittee: a written report was provided to the Commission members by Aleksandra Moch

 - b) GRAB – Dickinson
Nancy Dickinson reported proper waste management is one of the best solutions for the Green House Gas reduction. Greenwich’s Transfer Station goes above and beyond the mandatory recyclable materials collecting food scraps, batteries, corks, etc. There is also a designated area for Halloween pumpkins.
Aleksandra Moch recognized Myra Klockenbrink as one of the active members of the WFG responsible for cork collection from the local businesses.

Snehal Mhatre reported on the Great Pumpkin Rescue event hosted by WFG and CC on November 23rd. Two tones of pumpkins were collected. At the event there were educational tables, family friendly activities, and an opportunity to purchase a food scrap collection kit. The event was well attended and very successful.

 - c) Parks and Rec Board: the last meeting was canceled

 - d) Harbor Management Commission
Sue Baker reported the HMC had received a response from the Army Corps of Engineers confirming Greenwich being in full compliance with Greenwich Harbor being “open to all on an equal basis” regulation. Based on this response a request was made the USACE urging them to move ahead with preparing a permit to dredge Greenwich Harbor. Grass Island is being considered for dredge storage. The project is open to public comments. The CC members got engaged in a brief discussion about the extend of the proposed dredging and the best way to go over the funding.
Sue Baker also reported, the HMC had received a complaint from the Ethics Department saying they were “out of compliance” with the mooring and mooring vendors. The complaint is investigated.

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Ted Walworth requested the osprey nest be relocated from the yacht club due to birds defecating on the boats and dropping partially consumed fish. Sarah Coccaro responded, the nest could be relocated off season. The Town built a new nesting site for the birds at Eagle Pond and relocated the old nest made on the top of the statue. Unfortunately, the osprey rebuilt the nest at the original location ignoring the new platform.

Sue Baker corrected, the droppings affecting the boats are limited to the dead fish.

Gary Silberberg had asked why the Arch Street realignment was not reviewed by the department of Parks and Recreation. Bill Rutherford responded, the proposed work is confined within the town's right-of-way.

The CC members requested a copy of Pat Sesto's comments forwarded to RTM on behalf of the CC. A request was made to include Louisa Stone.

e) Leaf Blower Committee

Leslie Petrick stated the proposed draft will be submitted to the Board of Health.

Karen DeWahl stated, Quiet Yards Greenwich works with Ben Branyan, Town Administrator, and Pat Sesto with support from Fred Camillo. The language of the proposed ordinance is being reviewed by the Law Department. Once reviewed it will be submitted to the Board of Health seeking their approval under the existing noise ordinance. If not successful, the ordinance will be forwarded to RTM for their consideration.

11) Old Business

a) Open Space Plan

Pat Sesto was not present at the meeting. The plan will be placed on the December 12th RTM agenda.

b) Flood markers

Eric Brower provided all the details to Sue Baker who will be working with Parks and Recreation staff to obtain the estimate for the material considered for the post installation.

c) Porcelain berries – Silberberg

Gary Silberberg reported meeting briefly with Dr. Kramer to discuss the issue. Bill Rutherford recommended managing the vines during winter time by cutting the base and painting the stem with Roundup.

12) New Business

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Ted Walworth was concerned about the town not having a mechanism to acquire open space. This concern was also emphasized by Pat Sesto during her open space plan presentation. He felt the CC should encourage the Town to consider some tools. Bill Rutherford recommended to focus on passing the Open Space Plan and revisit the issue as the follow up step. Sue Baker recommended to consider a dedicated account similar to the one Parks and Recreation has to accept public donations to their projects. Eric Brower stated an enabling legislation may be needed to include a percentage of the real estate sale to the open space fund. Such dedicated fund would also need BET approval. He briefly went over the history of the open space acquisition in town.

13) Public comments

Bill Rutherford called for public comments.

Alex Popp representing the local community and descendants of the buried at the Byram Cemetery unveiled a list of complaints including:

- Leaning headstones which needs to be resealed
- Lack of survey of the area with ground penetrating radar to establish the boundary
- Lack of response from the CC members to his emails inviting them for a site meeting
- Need of a small budget to offset some of the maintenance cost

Alex Popp had reached out to the Law Department to receive a determination of the tombstone ownership. He pointed out it has been several years the Town took over the ownership of the cemetery. No maintenance or maintenance plan has been provided.

Eric Brower stated the CC has been going through major staffing changes which has caused the delay and lack of responsiveness. The members are remaining open to meet and work on properly addressing the issues.

Alex Popp requested the topic be maintained on CC meeting agenda until the solution is worked out. This will prevent the area from becoming permanently neglected.

Eric Brower pointed out, funds for a survey were made available in the upcoming budget. Nancy

Dickinson stated, more reliable than ground penetrating radar method may be used for the boundary identification. A forensic archeologist may have to be involved. They should also involve Dr. Sarah P. Sportman, State Archeologist.

Several CC members agreed to a meeting at the cemetery. Bill Rutherford urged to make sure such meeting is posted in advance with the Town Clerk.

Lauren Taylor stated her email dated November 25 was not responded to. She was concerned about the minutes reflecting discussion about the cemetery without the topic being posted on the agenda. Bill Rutherford stated the discussion was limited to the funding for a ground

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penetrated radar and it was under the budget. The exchange was limited to budgetary items not the cemetery. Laureen Taylor introduced herself as a descendant of the Lyon family members buried at Byram Cemetery. She felt left out from the discussion. She admitted hiring a worker to take care of her family's grave. She did not understand the role Alex Popp plays in the site maintenance.

Eric Brower explained Mr. Popp's involvement in community affairs and the role he plays working hand in hand with Parks and Recreation to upkeep the cemetery. He emphasized the Town owns the burial ground and no maintenance should take place before a proper maintenance protocol is drafted.

Bill Rutherford requested a protocol for Byram Cemetery be put on the upcoming agenda and discussed. Laureen Taylor was invited to join this discussion.

Laureen Taylor asked why the other cemeteries in town are not being discussed. Nancy Dickinson responded Byram Cemetery is the only one of the unknown cemeteries the Town owns.

Myra Klockenbrink alluded to the previous discussion on waste management stating when food is wasted all the money and energy invested in growing, preparing is wasted. Addressing the food waste should be one of the priorities when addressing the Climate Change issues.

She also shared with the CC members, Pomerance Park was purchased by the Town via borrowed funds. This could be one of the tools considered in the future for open space acquisition.

Gary Silberberg asked what corks are being reused for. Myra Klockenbrink responded with a long list of repurposing. Eric Brower added cork trees native to Spain play an important role in maintaining the local to Spain bird population. Cork is also a competitive plastic alternative.

14) Adjourn – next meeting is January 6, 2023

At 9:11pm Silberberg made a motion, seconded by Dickinson and carried 7-0-0.

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