MINUTES
December 2, 2021 via Zoom

Members present: William Rutherford, Eric Brower, Nancy Dickinson, Sue Baker (joined at 7:09pm), Lisette Henry (joined at 7:09pm), Laura di Bonaventura (joined at 7:33pm), and Karen DeWahl

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

Audience: Paul Hearn

1) Call to Order at 7:06 pm by Rutherford

2) Seating of Alternates:
   DeWahl was seated for Silberberg

3) Review and approve minutes: November 4, 2021
   A motion was made by DeWahl and seconded by Brower to approve the minutes as amended. The motion carried 4-0-0.

4) Review of Correspondence: no correspondence

5) Chairman’s Report: no report.

Baker and Henrey had joined the meeting (7:09pm)

6) Conference / Program Reminders:

7) Fisheries/Wildlife
   a. RBV and V-STeM community science programs: a written report was provided

   Sesto stated the program was held at the Boy Scouts of America preserve by Sarah Coccaro and Doreen Carroll Andrews, Wetland Compliance Officer, with a good number of volunteers. Carroll Andrews had brought her experience from administering this program for many years and Coccaro supplied volunteers making it an enjoyable learning experience. Coccaro stated the samples of micro-invertebrates collected from the stream were sent to the CT DEEP for verification and classification of the stream. Henry provided the list of most common species found in the field. Rutherford requested a copy of the findings.
8) Ongoing projects

a. Pollinator Pathway: a written report was provided

Rutherford had noticed himself featured on the picture of the mural garden installation. He has shared his experience of working with the group of volunteers and prized the plant choices for the area.

b. Bruce Museum/Conservation Commission citizen science project, “Greenwich Flood Watchers”: a written report was provided

Coccaro encouraged participation in this program. The new app documenting coastal flooding through citizen science was customized for Greenwich. She noted the extremely high tides scheduled for the upcoming Saturday and Sunday around 10:00am.

9) Education/Outreach

a. Kiss the Ground screening and panel discussion: a written report was provided

Sesto reported a very good turnout for the movie and the panel discussion.

b. Merry, Bright and Waste Free Holidays webinar: a written report was provided

10) Committee and Liaison Reports

a. Open Space Committee

Sesto reported, the plan is still in the draft face.

b. Sustainability Committee

Sesto stated the newly sworn selectperson, Janet Stone McGuigan is taking over Jill Oberlander’s co-chair position on the Greenwich Sustainability Committee. The committee voted to request funding for a staff position being shared by the Energy Management Advisory Committee and GSC. Stone McGuigan will present the request at the next Selectmen’s meeting.

c. Transportation and Air Quality subcommittee: a written report was provided

d. GRAB:

Dickinson reported the new Waste Wizard works well. The link is provided at the West Free Greenwich site. She also pointed out all the important efforts the group is pursuing.

Baker asked why tissue paper is not recyclable. Sesto responded they are made from a recycled fiber which made them non-viable for future recycling.

Dickinson stated there is a new company in Old Greenwich which started curb-side compost pickup. Pyoor LLC was initiated by Heidi Horn and started with robotic lawn care. Her compost pickup service offers to the customers three free bags of compost annually.

e. Parks and Rec Board

Baker reported no meeting was conducted last month. The upcoming meeting will celebrate the holidays when conducting business.

Di Bonaventura joined the meeting at 7:33pm

f. Harbor Management Commission
Baker reported the next meeting was scheduled for December 17th. The commission is flooded with new dock applications. Baker will meet with Coccaro on December 3rd to review the newly received applications, one of them is for a seawall restoration.

g. Leaf Blower Committee

DeWahl reported the group is in process of researching and learning. Several of the members had attended an electric landscape equipment expo in Rye Brook, making new connections and testing the equipment. A few of the staff members of Greenwich Park and Recreation Department were there getting more information and testing electric mowers. The group created a stakeholder list and prepared surveys one for the property owners and one for the landscapers. Di Bonaventura recommended landscapers be contacted. She felt the questions in the surveys should be quantitative, which helps to evaluate the intensity of concerns.

DeWahl summarized the past efforts and the original resolution. Brower noted the landscapers and the property owners have their own agenda. The general public is unaware of the impact of the blowers on the land. Brower explained there is false hope that removing gas equipment will eliminate all the issues with blowers for the environment. Electric blowers will be less noisy and will eliminate the exhaust stench however the loss of soil, decomposing grass and vegetation, destruction of beneficial insects and creation of airborne particles and allergens will continue to be problematic. He felt education should come first and requested CC reviews the survey. Rutherford supported his request.

Sesto asked for more trust in the committee, noting the committee has identified all of the same issues members did tonight. She felt it is not necessary to involve CC in drafting the survey and agreed to present the final copy for the CC’s comments.

11) Old Business

a. CTDOT Corridor Study grant

Moch reported the WestCOG reached out to the CC staff with additional questions regarding the grant proposal. No final selection had been announced up to date.

b. East West Bike Route Study grant

Moch corrected the agenda, stating this is the same grant as referenced in “a.”

c. Grant for Phragmites Removal

Moch stated the grant request forwarded to the National Fish and Wildlife Federation was turned down. This funding should cover the Phragmites removal program in Bruce Park. Parks and Recreation may find some resources to move forward to eradicate the invasive in spring. The removal will follow by a restoration plan of the pond edges.

d. Coastal Resiliency Report

Sesto reported a final draft of the report was sent to the subcommittee. A meeting was held with the Commissioner of Public Works to finalize the resiliency strategies. Rutherford was pleased with Siebert’s knowledge and contribution to this effort. He was also grateful for the hard work of the entire committee.

di Bonaventura recommended including a reference to the Flood Watchers program. She offered to distribute the information through the schools. Coccaro stated Flood Watchers program is facilitated by the app MYCOAST. Greenwich is the first town in Connecticut involved in this program. CIRCA paid for the app. The app was intended for the local government to use it as well. Baker was concerned about inland flooding. Coccaro responded the app includes both coastal and inland flooding.
Baker asked about the status of flood markers. Brower responded the one at the Cos Cob Marina had been refurbished and installed on a rock. The other two for Ferry Landing and Greenwich Point are more challenging because they have to be installed on the ground. The material is still up in the air.

12) New Business

   a. FY2022 Budget

       Sesto stated the proposed budget has not been altered. The first cuts could be expected when the First Selectman’s budget is drafted.

13) Adjourn

       Sesto stated, next meeting is scheduled January 6, 2021.

       With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:11pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Aleksandra Moch