

WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

September 4, 2019

5:15 P.M.

Bryan Memorial Town Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Ms. Branson, Ms. Dupuis

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Sabin, Ms. Rawson, Mr. Conroy

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. O'Hazo

RESIDENTS PRESENT: Mr. Brinton, Mr. Furse, Ms. Audet, Ms. Turoczi

CLERK: Ms. Buell

With a quorum present, Ms. Payne called the meeting to order at 5:22 p.m. and seated Ms. Rawson, for Mr. O'Hazo.

Consideration of Minutes: 2:40

The minutes from the July 10, 2019 meeting were reviewed by the commission members.

A motion was made by Ms. Branson to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2019 meeting as written, seconded By Ms. Frank. Passed 5-0 vote.

Cricket Valley Power Plant/Air Quality Monitors: 3:19

Ms. Frank gave the commission members an update on the air quality monitor that is presently on School Street in Washington and collecting data. The Air quality monitor will be moved to Shepaug Valley School once the construction slows down. The Cricket Valley Energy Plant in Dover Plains will be coming online at the end of the year.

Solar Panel Regulations: 6:30

Mr. Furse, who is on the board of Solar Connecticut, explained to the commission members the

difference between residential and commercial solar panels. He works with the smaller residential solar panels. Mr. Furse informed the commission members about roof mounted solar and ground mounted solar panels. He discussed fire safety in regards to having roof mounted panels installed. He explained some of the factors that people consider when installing solar panels, current electric use and future use. He stated the rule of thumb for installing solar panels is about ninety percent of the electric bill for residential customers. They discussed how most towns consider ground mounted solar panels to be a structure and are regulated as such through the towns zoning regulations. He has had some property owner's plant trees and or shrubs to help hide the ground mounted panels from their neighbors view. Mr. Furse explained the life span for solar panels is about 30 years and he voiced his concern about what happens to the Panels at this point. He would like to see a solar panel recycling center for the expired panels.

Spring Hill Farms: 27:04

Ms. Audet from Spring Hill Farms, 292 Bee Brook Rd, asked for the commission to approve work that will be done to the property. This is being applied for because there is a conservation easement on the property. The commission members reviews the plans. There is no impact from the purposed work to the easement and the commission had no objections. Ms. Payne will write a letter of approval for Ms. Audet.

New Preston Falls Project: 34:04

Mr. Sabin reported that he will be meeting with the excavator on Thursday afternoon. The commission is eager to have the project started. Mr. Sabin handed Ms. Payne some estimates for the work.

Tree Cutting Regulations: 38:35

Ms. Branson called Linda Francois and she suggested Ms. Branson speak to Mr. Ainsworth. He spoke at length with her regarding tree regulations. He reviewed the draft that was purposed by Mr. Matthews he thought the draft is too complex. He thought that a zoning regulation is the way to proceed with the tree cutting regulation, not having a town ordinance. He does think that the Town of Washington does have the authority to regulate tree cutting on private property and mentioned Connecticut state Statute 7-148 municipal powers what a municipality can do. Mr. Sabin agrees that having zoning regulations is the way to go.

Ms. Branson referred to the tree cutting that was done by CL&P and how the CL&P easement looked right after the work was done. The area is now greening up, has shrubs and ground cover. This helps early succession habitat and edge habitat. The autobahn society says many birds thrive on this type of environment.

The commission discussed how trees help with water runoff. Mr. Sabin explained how the tree canopy help the ground to absorb rain water.

The commission discussed how they work as advisory for zoning and inland/wetlands and discussed the roles that each commission have, they believe that the three commission should work together. They discussed the town zoning regulation 14-7-13 which states that existing typography should be disturbed to a minimum.

They are hoping that if they have a public hearing regarding tree cutting regulations it could be a good way to educate the community. They would like Ms. Branson to revise the tree cutting regulations down to one page and submit to zoning. Mr. Sabin will include some key issues about drainage that will be included in Ms. Branson's revision.

Rabbit Hill wetlands and vernal pools 1:07.08

Ms. Dupuis stated that ninety percent of the issues regarding Rabbit Hill have already been addressed by the commission, making sure that trees and runoff is taken care of properly. Ms. Dupuis would like all three commissions working together.

Ms. Dupuis would like to have vernal pools in the town be mapped. She would like to contact Ms. Corrigan in regards to having the mapping done along with the cost associated with the mapping.

Other and or Old Business

Solar Regulations:

Mr. Conroy and Mr. O'Hazo were asked by the commission members to research if other towns have zoning guidelines for home owner's that have solar panels, such as screening from neighbors view and or proper removal after lifespan of solar panels.

Minutes: 1:12.30

The Land use administrator, Ms. White, has asked for the minutes of the Conservation Commission to be sent to the Inland/wetland commissioners. The commission thinks this is a wonderful way for the commissioners to keep up to date with what's going on with each commission.

Tree Arboretum: 1:15.32

Ms. Branson would like to see if they could reach out to someone under the guides of education to label notable tree in the town. Ms. Payne suggested that they might reach out to one of the schools and maybe a senior project idea for a student. A long time ago notable trees were mapped on public byways. Ms. Payne had the older mapping book and the commission reviewed it.

Cell Tower/choice of site in Warren: 1:17.53

Ms. Dupuis reported that there are no updates on the cell tower, choice of site in Warren.

Motion to Adjourn the meeting at 6:38 p.m. by Susan Payne, Seconded by Linda Frank Passed 5-0 vote

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Buell

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Conservation Commission Clerk

September 10, 2019

