

## Conservation Commission

### MINUTES October 3, 2018

5:00 p.m.

Bryan Memorial Town Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mrs. Payne, Mrs. Frank

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mrs. Branson, Mrs. Rawson  
Mr. Sabin arrived after the meeting was called to order

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. DeLuca

NOT PRESENT: Mr. Bernard, Mr. O'Hazo, Mrs. Dupuis

With a quorum established after seating Mrs. Branson and Mrs. Rawson, Mrs. Payne called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. and introduced the new Conservation Commission Clerk, Joan DeLuca, to the members.

After a brief discussion, the members agreed to push back the meeting start time.

*A motion was made by Mrs. Payne to begin the Conservation Commission meetings at 5:15 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month, with the exception of August, when the Commission has agreed not to meet. Seconded by Mrs. Frank and passed 4-0.*

**Consideration of the Minutes:** Mrs. Payne noted that the Minutes needed to be corrected to indicate that Mrs. Frank made the motion to accept last month's Minutes.

*A motion was made by Mrs. Branson to accept the Minutes with the correction that the motion to accept the July 11, 2018 Minutes was made by Mrs. Frank and seconded by Ms. Dupuis, not made and seconded by Ms. Dupuis, as written. Seconded by Mrs. Frank and passed 4-0.*

**Cricket Valley Power Plant - September 26, 2018 Meeting:** Mrs. Frank reported that she and Mrs. Payne attended the meeting, moderated by Tim Abbott, which was well attended and offered a balanced view of the power plant and its related issues. She noted that the Western Connecticut Clean Air Action Group appears to be very supportive of the Conservation Commission's concerns, with members who seem capable and engaged.

Though air quality testing sites have not yet been finalized, there was discussion that once initial testing is done, there will be a good baseline. Commission members discussed a possible site visit to the Dover Plains monitoring station for educational purposes.

When the point was raised about future cost to the town, there was a brief discussion about the town's Open Space Fund. Mrs. Payne clarified that the fund is for monitoring the land, and was unsure if monies could be tapped through the Conservation Commission's right of stewardship. It was also clarified that the funds from the sale of the Pavilion are earmarked for development in New Preston.

**New Preston Falls Update\***: With Mr. Sabin not yet present, Mrs. Payne suggested that the next item on the agenda be visited, though she mentioned that the Conservation Commission will be hosting a table at the town's Fall Harvest Festival on October 13, 2018. She hopes to have information about the Cricket Falls Power Plant, as well as the New Preston Falls project available for those residents who are interested in learning more information.

Mrs. Payne notified members that the library would like the Conservation Commission to make a presentation in the spring of 2019 to apprise residents of its goals and objectives. With that, Mrs. Payne read the mandate of the Conservation Commission to the group, to reinforce and remind those present of their charge.

**Phragmites Removal by All Habitat (Permit for 6/29/2017-12/31/2019)**: Mrs. Payne reported that Mr. O'Hazo has identified the property owners that abut the open space property on the Flirtation Road side; those owners with phragmites might be contacted.

Mrs. Frank noted that with the extremely wet conditions, very little change has occurred.

**The Ingrassia Property on Bee Brook Road**: Mrs. Payne notified members that she signed off that the property's plans for a tent at an event next summer will not impact the Conservation Commission's easement. If the tent location on the submitted map changes, the Conservation Commission must be notified to review potential impact on easement areas.

Mrs. Branson questioned whether future plans for the property might violate any of the town's current zoning regulations, and Mr. Sabin clarified the town's zoning enforcement procedures. Mrs. Payne and Mrs. Branson recommended that other members read the Minutes of the most recent Board of Selectmen Meeting, in order to stay aware of matters the town is currently facing.

**\*New Preston Falls Project Update**: Mrs. Payne noted that the fencing for the property has not yet been installed, but she confirmed with the First Selectman that it is on the list of approved items.

Mr. Sabin said he is fully prepared to do a rendering of the project so that the Commission can begin formally fundraising for the project. Mrs. Payne suggested that the matter be discussed at next month's meeting, so that more committee members could be present to add their input.

Plants at the site are beginning to fill in, and Mrs. Frank added that the area does not look as bare as it did initially.

**Sustainable CT Initiative – Meeting 10/03/2018 at 7:00 p.m.:** Mrs. Payne notified members that she planned on attending and hoped to report back to members at the next meeting.

**Viewline/Ridgeline & Tree Cutting Regulations:** Mrs. Payne shared a handout from Karen Nelson of the Northwest Conservation District, as it offered solid information about current regulations and best practices. Mrs. Payne also stressed that Conservation's goal to draft regulations be focused on in the coming months.

There was discussion regarding issues of land clearing within the town and surrounding areas, and Mrs. Rawson noted that residents do not realize what they have lost or what damage has been done until it is too late. There was a general consensus that cutting forested areas or slopes with mature trees appears to cause problems due to water runoff issues, and Mrs. Payne suggested that members read up on the regulations the Town of Kent currently has in place.

Mr. Sabin added that there are towns in New York that tag trees of a certain size; residents need to seek approval before those trees can be cut. He also added that First Light Utility, which is responsible for Candlewood Lake, has stringent requirements, such as restrictions on tree cutting, hardscaping, and the use of native plants. Other members agreed that offering guidance to the town is a goal Conservation should strive to achieve.

Mrs. Frank reported that a Town Tree Arboretum is still being considered, and hopes to speak to the principal of Shepaug High School, as well as the district's new superintendent, as a senior project for a high school student. She would like to exhaust all avenues in the public school system, before reaching out to area private schools. Other members agreed that if the next step is taken, finding someone knowledgeable to mentor the project, such as Tom Osborne, would be a sound idea.

**Washington's Harvest Festival – October 13, 2018:** Mrs. Payne again reminded members that Conservation would be setting up a table and asked for volunteers to cover it during the day. An email asking such will be going out shortly.

**Revisiting Subdivision Plans:** Mrs. Payne reported that the subdivision open space set-aside plans presented by Wayne Hillman, chairman of the Planning Commission, are being reevaluated and Planning would like our input. Conservation addressed this issue at its January meeting, and a handout from that meeting regarding current regulations was provided to those members present. Mrs. Payne would like to see the Conservation Commission make suggestions to Planning, Inland Wetlands or Zoning that might better protect the town's resources, ridgelines and views. Mrs. Payne also noted that prior easements may not have language that is as clear as the Commission originally intended, and hopes that more specific language can be added in the future that might protect trees, or ensure that the easements are better maintained by property owners.

**New and Ongoing Business:**

- The knotweed at New Preston Falls and New Preston Open Space is in check
- Members discussed Question #2, Protect Public Lands, on November's upcoming ballot, and Mrs. Rawson explained the importance of voting yes. A yes vote will require a public hearing before the CT State Legislature can sell public land.
- The Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions will be holding its annual meeting on November 17, 2019.
- Land Use issues/concerns in the town prompted Mrs. Payne to read the letter from Mrs. Stephanie Johnson that was incorporated into the Board of Selectmen's Minutes from its last meeting on September 20, 2018. Mr. Sabin offered that some issues might be better enforced by the State of Connecticut, and while members agreed, they would also like to see Washington do better.

Mrs. Payne adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Joan DeLuca  
Conservation Commission Clerk