

# WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## MINUTES

December 2, 2020

5:15 P.M.

Meeting Held Via Zoom Conference

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Mr. O'Hazo, Mr. Conroy

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Dupuis

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Ms. Rawson, Mr. Macdonald

Others: Mr. Hubelbank, Selectman, Ms. Zukauskas, Mr. Davis, Mr. Charles

CLERK: Mr. Buell

With a quorum present, Ms. Payne called the meeting to order at 5:19 p.m. and seated Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Mr. O'Hazo, Mr. Conroy, and Ms. Rawson (for Ms. Dupuis).

### Consideration of Minutes: 5:15

**Motion:** *To approve the minutes from the October 7, 2020 meeting as written by Ms. Rawson seconded by Ms. Frank. Passed 5-0.*

### Sustainability Committee: 5:45

Ms. Payne introduced Mr. Hubelbank as a town Selectman, and as the Chair of the town's Sustainability Committee, then requested that he give the Commission a small background on this Committee.

Mr. Hubelbank informed the Commission that the state of Connecticut had started a Sustainability Action Committee some years ago. He went on to explain that the state's Sustainability Committee had developed 9 action items which they hoped each town would use based upon their individual needs to improve the present and future of these towns. Mr. Hubelbank stated that after attending a meeting hosted by this Sustainability Committee, he and others from the town brought these ideas to the town's Board of Selectman, and a motion was passed to form the Town of Washington's Sustainability Committee.

Mr. Hubelbank explained that for this Committee to exist, a town selectman needed to be on it, and that he had volunteered himself for this responsibility. He went on to state that in the early stages of forming the Committee he had discovered that a sub-committee under the town's Planning Committee which focused on substantiality already existed and that it had not met for a number of years. After speaking with the chair of the Planning Committee, he reached out to members of this sub-committee with the hope of forming a new Sustainability Committee.

Mr. Hubelbank then informed the Commission that one accomplishment from the Sustainability Committee was that it had gotten a town ordinance passed which banned plastic bags a month prior to

the state's ban on plastic bags, and that the next project that this Committee wished to undertake was a renovation of the town's transfer station that they hoped would include composting areas, among other improvements.

At this point, Mr. Hubelbank indicated that Mr. Davis, who had received a call, had become a distraction. Ms. Payne along with Ms. Frank requested that the clerk mute Mr. Davis within the zoom call.

Mr. Hubelbank then asked the Commission if they had any questions regarding the Sustainability Committee, and Ms. Payne requested that Conservation Commission members review the documentation that had been given by Mr. Hubelbank, and the state of Connecticut's Substantiality Committee website because she believed it would be good for a member of the Conservation Commission to be involved in the Sustainability Committee.

Ms. Frank asked when the Committee met, and Mr. Hubelbank explained that the Sustainability Committee met once a month at a time that worked well for its members with their given work schedules, but that they did not have a specific time that they met each month.

Mr. Conroy asked how many members were on the Committee and was told by Mr. Hubelbank that there are presently 5 members, they hoped for 1 or 2 additional members, and that potential members needed to be residents of the Town of Washington.

Ms. Rawson inquired Mr. Hubelbank about the time requirement for Committee members, and was told that members could put as much, or as little time as they desired into the Committee. He then indicated that in January, February, and March a number of meetings would be held in regards to the transfer station, and that aside from these meetings, members would likely spend an equivalent amount of time dedicated to this Committee as they did to the Conservation Commission.

With no further questions for Mr. Hubelbank, Ms. Rawson thanked him and Ms. Payne for their efforts towards making the town more sustainable.

#### **New Preston Falls Maintenance, Historic Informational Sign 16:10**

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that she had picked up the historic informational sign and that she planned to have Mr. O'Hazo visit to take pictures of it to send to the rest of the Commission. Ms. Payne then noted that a typo had been made regarding the capitalization of one of the falls in the last paragraph.

Ms. Payne stated that she hoped to have a formal commitment from the town to provide proper maintenance for the falls, and that she would be contacting Mr. Brinton, First Selectman, with the hope of securing this commitment. Mr. Hubelbank let the Commission know that it was almost time to consider the town's budget, and that it would be prudent to try to secure this maintenance as part of the town's next budget soon.

#### **LID/Low Impact Development and Tree Regulations 18:50**

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that their recommendations for these regulations were with the Zoning Commission and that they were waiting for these changes to be included in the agenda for this Commission. Mr. Conroy indicated that he would reach out to Mr. Solley, Chair of the Zoning Commission, to help move this along.

#### **School Street and River Walk Maintenance 19:35**

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that she did not get a chance to make any further progress on this project and that she would like to revisit it in the coming year. She then went on to state that the knotweed issue near the riverbend was still in good condition and that there was still a lovely view of the river from that location. Ms. Payne then encouraged the Commission to partake in this walk.

#### **Western CT Clean Air Action Report 20:00**

Ms. Frank explained to the Commission that they were still waiting for the monitor to be returned after being recalibrated and having its filters replaced at a shop. She indicated that she believed that the monitor would be delivered to a shop in Kent this week, and that she along with Mr. Gewanter, would be able to pick it up and bring it to the Shepaug Valley Highschool where it would be at a higher elevation than its previous location at the Washington Primary School.

#### **Other Business 21:05**

Ms. Payne stated that before considering 2021 projects she would like to jump ahead to the "Other Business" section of the agenda to discuss the meeting calendar for the 2021 year. She indicated that Mr. Buell had written up the calendar and asked if everyone on the Commission had received a copy of this calendar. The Commission members present all indicated that they had received a copy, and Ms. Payne asked if there was a motion to accept the calendar.

**Motion:** *To approve the Conservation Commission's 2021 proposed meeting schedule by Ms. Frank seconded by Ms. Rawson. Passed 5-0.*

Following this motion, Ms. Payne reminded the Commission that they would be continuing to meet at 5:15 in 2021.

#### **Consider Projects for 2021 21:40**

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that Steep Rock was still working on the acquisition of the hillside farm on Nettleton Hollow and that the funds that the Conservation Commission would be able to put from the Open Space Fund towards this project would need to be approved at a town meeting, but that the process had been stalled and it would not be brought forward until this coming spring at the earliest.

Ms. Payne went on to let the Commission know that she had discovered that a grant had been approved for \$160,000.00 to support of the acquisition of 3 properties in the Hidden Valley area.

Ms. Frank indicated that she believed that the New Preston Open Space was not visible enough to the public and that the Commission should consider the construction of some discreet signs to make this area more visible. She then indicated that including the existence of this area on the town website might also be a prudent step towards achieving this.

Ms. Payne stated that if the Commission were to make this area more well known to the public, residents in the area would need to be well informed in regards to this change because there was initially a concern that this space would become a nuisance to them when it was acquired by the town. Mr. Macdonald stated that he believed the Commission should consider marking trees with dots in a similar fashion to the ones at Steep Rock to show the public the best way to access this area. He then voiced concern over the treatment of some invasive species in the area and the Commission agreed that

this would be a terrific project, but that it was also very costly. This project will be revisited at a later date.

**Recommendations for Alternate Vacancy**

Though it was included on the agenda, this was not discussed at the meeting.

**Cell Tower 31:10**

Ms. Payne indicated that there was no new news on this subject, and that this would be addressed at the January, 2021 meeting.

**Motion:**        *To adjourn meeting at 5:48 p.m. by Ms. Rawson seconded by Mr. O'Hazo,  
Passed 5-0.*

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dennis Buell", is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp.

Dennis Buell

Conservation Commission Clerk

Town of Washington