

# WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## MINUTES February 3, 2021

**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

CLERK: Mr. Buell

Ms. Payne called the meeting to order at 5:23 p.m. and seated Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Mr. O'Hazo, Mr. Conroy, and Ms. Rawson (for Ms. Dupuis).

### **Consideration of Minutes for 1/06/2021 Meeting**

**Motion:** *To approve the minutes from the January 6, 2021 meeting as written by Ms. Rawson, seconded by Mr. Conroy. Passed 5-0.*

### **New Preston Open Space and Falls Management.**

Ms. Payne indicated to the Commission that she had sent them all information regarding All Habitat's proposed treatment plan for the phragmites in the New Preston Open Space, and asked if the Commission had any comments or questions regarding this plan. Mr. Conroy asked if the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's permitting fees were charged once, or if it was applied whenever herbicides were used. Ms. Payne checked the plan and stated that the \$350.00 permitting fee was charged yearly for the use of these herbicides, and the Commission made note of the fact that All Habitat's proposal did not clearly state how much the work would cost in total.

Ms. Rawson stated that the proposal does not indicate how much herbicide would be used and expressed concern about the use of these chemicals. Ms. Rawson went on to say that the Commission should determine a clear understanding of what "success" will be in its handling of the phragmite infestation. She indicated that she would like to find out if native plant species would be able to return to the area following the use of herbicides, and questioned whether the Commission's efforts in this area could be

considered to be successful if not. She also indicated that the Commission should additionally have a clear understanding of how successful herbicide treatments usually are in terms of their elimination of phragmites.

Mr. Conroy stated to the Commission that he would like more information on how many visits would be needed and the associated cost of these visits. Ms. Frank indicated to the Commission that they should consider treatment of phragmites on the shoreline of the pond so that potential visitors would be able to enjoy a view of the pond. She stated that she would like to ask All Habitat if mowing the phragmites annually would have a positive effect on the area.

Ms. Rawson stated to the Commission that the phragmites in the area are not solely on land belonging to the New Preston Open Space and that their treatment plan must take this into consideration. She indicated that the phragmites on neighboring properties would likely make it much more difficult to deal with the problem on the New Preston Open Space because they would continue to reseed the area. She went on to remind the Commission that Ms. Dupuis, who was not present for this meeting, had volunteered to investigate alternative methods of dealing with the phragmites. Ms. Payne reminded the Commission that Ms. Dupuis had previously mentioned a company based out of Massachusetts which may be able to help in dealing with the infestation. Ms. Frank stated that she would like to ask All Habitat if they could offer some herbicide-free treatment options for this project. Ms. Payne informed the Commission that she will ask All Habitat to join the next Conservation Commission meeting to help answer any questions they may have regarding this.

Ms. Payne stated to the Commission that Mr. Brinton, First Selectman, had intended to join the meeting to inform them about proposed work on Gunn Hill scenic road, but unfortunately had not joined the Zoom meeting to discuss this.

### **Sustainability Committee**

Ms. Payne indicated to the Commission that the Sustainability Committee was continuing to work on the list of action items which had been provided by the state of Connecticut. She went on to state that the Committee is examining the Natural Resource Inventory Report, and that this is a very comprehensive document. She went

on to say that the maps included in this report need to be updated. Ms. Payne encouraged the Commission to look through this report and to see if, aside from the maps, anything should be updated.

### **Solar Permitting**

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that one action item which the Sustainability Committee would potentially address was the permitting of solar panels. She indicated that she believed that the Conservation Commission should also look into these permits. Ms. Frank asked if a proposal for this had ever been written up, and was informed that no formal proposal has ever been created. The Commission agreed that it would be beneficial to write up a proposal so that the Zoning Commission would be able to address the creation of a solar panel permitting process. The Commission then had a short discussion regarding the possible existence of an inventory of street lights within Washington and determined that this had likely never been created.

### **Tree Regulations**

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that no progress had been made on the proposed tree regulations as the Zoning Commission has yet to address the issue.

### **Western Ct Clean Air Action Report**

Ms. Frank reported that the monitors are waiting for parts and then they need to be recalibrated. She went on to remind the Commission that the company which had created these monitors is based out of New Zealand which has made this process more difficult. Ms. Frank stated that she and Mr. Gewanter had visited Shepaug Valley Highschool to find a suitable location for the monitor once it has been repaired.

### **New Projects 2021**

Ms. Payne asked Ms. Rawson if there was any news on the statewide legislation which had been discussed at the previous meeting. Ms. Rawson indicated that there was no new information on this proposed legislation and that she would keep the Commission up to date on the issue.

Ms. Frank explained to the Commission that the Town of Washington's Community Center planned to put in new plants in the coming year, and suggested that the

Conservation Commission reach out to those involved to attempt to get native trees planted at this location. She went on to state that she wished to have informational plaques placed with these native trees so that visitors would be able to learn about trees native to Washington. Ms. Frank asked Ms. Rawson if there was an inventory of the kinds of forests which exist in Connecticut and Ms. Rawson stated that there is. Following this, Ms. Rawson indicated that there are two maps that she would share with the Commission which she believes to be applicable to the Natural Resource Inventory Report mentioned earlier in the meeting. She stated that these are a climate resiliency map, and a core forest map and went on to explain the purpose of these maps.

**Motion:**        *To adjourn the meeting at 5:56 p.m. by Ms. Payne, seconded by Mr. O'Hazo. Passed 5-0.*

Respectfully Submitted,



Dennis Buell  
Conservation Commission Clerk  
Town of Washington