

# WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## MINUTES

May 5, 2021

5:15 P.M.

Meeting Held Via Zoom Conference

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Mr. Conroy, Ms. Rawson
ALTERNATES PRESENT	Mr. Macdonald, Mr. Gewanter
CLERK:	Mr. Buell
OTHERS:	Mr. Furse, Mr. Charles

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:19 and seated Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Mr. Conroy, Ms. Rawson, and Mr. Gewanter.

### **Commission Members: New Alternate, One Resignation**

Ms. Payne stated to the Commission that Ms. Dupuis had resigned, and that she had been on the Commission since 2003. She thanked Ms. Dupuis for her service to the town and following this, welcomed Mr. Gewanter to the Commission.

### **Approval of Minutes for the April 7, 2021 Meeting.**

The Chair Asked the Commission if there were any concerns or comments regarding the minutes for the April 7, 2021 meeting and Mr. Conroy stated that he was not listed in the list of members who had been present for the meeting and asked that this mistake be corrected.

Motion: To approve the amended minutes the from the April 7, 2021 meeting by Ms. Frank, seconded by Ms. Rawson. Passed 5-0.

### **Revisit Guidance re Solar Panel Placement**

Ms. Payne stated that at her request, Mr. Furse had agreed to provide the Commission some information on solar panels. Following this introduction, Mr. Furse explained that in the past under the Green Bank it had not been economically viable to construct more solar panels on one's property than would be required to run one's home within Connecticut. He stated that this was because the amount of money that would be paid to the property owner for unused electricity would be a pittance. Mr. Furse went on to state that going forward, the Green Bank will not be running this program and that Eversource will now directly manage it, and that the

value on unused energy from solar panels will rise substantially. He stated that presently, homeowners receive \$00.06 for an unused kWh and that this could potentially be raised to \$00.29 for that amount of energy which would be a substantial increase in its value. Mr. Furse explained that this change is occurring at a time where the installation of solar panels is dropping dramatically, which means that in the future towns may begin to see property owners with large parcels of land decide to install large solar fields on their properties. He stated that these new regulations have not been finalized but that, as of now, they are similar to Germany's solar program.

Ms. Frank asked if other towns have zoning regulations for residential solar farms and Mr. Furse stated that he is presently not aware of any but that going forward he expected this to change. Mr. Conroy asked if Mr. Furse had an example of how large a solar farm would need to be to support a normal 3-bedroom home, and Mr. Furse explained that he could not because every home's individual needs are different. Ms. Frank asked if he had ever spoken with the Town of Washington's Zoning Commission regarding this, and he stated that he had not.

Ms. Payne indicated that she felt that the Conservation Commission should consider a recommendation to the Zoning Commission. Ms. Rawson asked what other aspects of the system Mr. Furse would alter if he could consider residential solar. To provide an example of how solar could be improved within the state, Mr. Furse explained that the State of Connecticut is behind many other states on community solar which would enable people to invest in public solar systems which would in turn reduce their personal electric bills.

### **New Preston Falls Historic Info Signs**

Ms. Payne stated that she had met with Mr. Brinton, First Selectman, and that he had taken the signs to have them installed. She went on to state that 3 locations have been identified. There will be one at the picnic area on 45, one on the split rail fence preventing access to the Falls down next to the river, and finally one at the bridge on Church Street near the Falls.

### **New Preston Open Space Management**

Ms. Payne asked Ms. Frank to inform the Commission on the work that had been done at Lake Waramaug and with New England Aquatic to help tackle the phragmite infestation at the New Preston Open Space.

Ms. Frank informed the Commission that she, Mr. Macdonald, and Mr. Gewanter had all taken a trip to Lake Waramaug, and that they had cut several phragmites approximately 6 inches under the water level to see if this would effectively drown the plants. She went on to state that within the coming weeks, they would return to this location to see if they could identify any signs of this having been effective in any way whatsoever.

Ms. Frank continued by stating that after speaking with the owner of New England Aquatic, they had agreed to bring a pontoon boat to the New Preston Open Space with a tool which would allow them to cut the phragmites under the water to attempt to kill them in this fashion

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

Mr. Gewanter informed the Commission that according to the monitoring device on his property, the air quality in the Town of Washington is quite excellent. He went on to explain that he had compared that data with the online monitoring reports for other towns around Connecticut and New York, and had found that in towns farther away particle counts were higher than in Washington, which did not surprise him given his understanding of physics.

### **Conservation Easement Proposal**

Ms. Payne informed Mr. Charles that he had not submitted his proposal for a new Conservation Easement early enough for the Commission to review it at this meeting. She went on to state that she would also like to have a site visit before the Commission decided on this proposed easement.

Ms. Frank asked if this land was suitable for development, and Mr. Charles stated that the area was developable because it held great soils for septic systems. Ms. Frank then stated that she did not believe that this proposal met the present standards for an easement as this space would not be visible from the road.

### **Native Trees for New Community Center Landscape**

Native trees for the new Community Center were covered last time.

### **LID/Low Impact Development & Tree Regulations**

Ms. Payne indicated that Low Impact Development/Tree Regs were not yet considered by the Zoning Commission.

### **Other and/or Old Business**

Earth Day

Ms. Payne thanked Ms. Frank, Mr. Gewanter, and Mr. Macdonald for their participation at the Earth Day event. She stated that Ms. Gorra made a great effort in organizing the event but that the event was not well attended.

Ms. Payne stated that the Commission will need to consider future projects and thanked Ms. Dupuis again for her service as a member of the Commission.

Meeting adjourned at 5:54.

Respectfully Submitted:

Dennis Buell  
Conservation Commission Clerk  
5-12-2021