

WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

January 6, 2021

5:15 P.M.

Meeting Held Via Zoom Conference

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Mr. Conroy, Ms. Dupuis

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. O'Hazo

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Ms. Rawson, Mr. Macdonald

CLERK: Mr. Buell

Ms. Payne called the meeting to order at 5:21 p.m. and seated Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank (Who joined at 5:23), Mr. Conroy, Ms. Dupuis, and Mr. Macdonald (for Mr. O'Hazo).

Approval of Minutes for Dec. 2, 2020 Meeting 4:27

Motion: *To approve the minutes from the December 2, 2020 meeting as written by Mr. Macdonald, seconded by Ms. Dupuis. Passed 4-0.*

Sustainability Committee 5:45

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that the Sustainability Committee has agreed to meet regularly under the leadership of Mr. Hubelbank, Selectman, on the second Wednesday of each month at 5:00. She indicated that she still believed that it would be prudent to have a member of the Conservation Commission on this committee.

Ms. Frank joined the Zoom call at this time. 6:14

Election of Officers 6:40

Motion: *To appoint Ms. Payne as the Chair of the Conservation Commission, and to appoint Ms. Frank as the Vice Chair of the Commission by Ms. Dupuis, seconded by Mr. Macdonald. Passed 5-0.*

New Preston Open Space: Managing the Invasives 7:50

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that work needs to be done to discover the exact boundary lines of the open space because there are conflicting maps of the area. She went on to report that the phragmites found throughout the New Preston Open Space will likely destroy the wetlands and that to preserve them the Commission will need to act. The Commission then agreed that the greatest challenge in dealing with this invasive species is the cost of doing so.

Ms. Rawson, who is the Executive Director of the Northwest CT Land Conservancy (NCLC), was asked by the Commission to explain how this kind of issue has been dealt with within that organization. She went on to explain that the NCLC does extensive research into the impact of any herbicide used, and that they are very careful to ensure that the NCLC, along with nearby neighbors, are all comfortable with the use of herbicides in these cases. Ms. Rawson indicated that when issuing pesticide permits, the state places a tremendous emphasis upon the agreement of these neighbors and that the Conservation Commission would need to go through the same process to obtain permission from the state to use pesticides to deal with the phragmites.

The Commission then had a discussion regarding additional ways in which they may control the phragmite population without harming the area. Ms. Dupuis voiced concern over the use of herbicides and mentioned a Massachusetts environmental company which may be able to assist the Commission in dealing with the phragmites without the use of chemicals. Ms. Payne indicated that there are several very expensive methods to deal with this issue that would be difficult to afford for the Commission. The Commission agreed to do more research on this issue.

New Preston Falls Maintenance, Historic Informational Sign 21:55

Ms. Payne stated to the Commission that she still had the Historic Information Sign at her residence, and that she needed to find someone to help her install it. She suggested possibly reaching out to the town to see if there are any town employees able to assist her in this project.

LID/Low Impact Development & Tree Regs 22:25

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that no progress has been made this month regarding these regulations as they still need to be discussed by the Zoning Commission.

Western CT Clean Air Action Report – Linda Frank 22:45

Ms. Frank stated to the Commission that the monitors have still not been repaired and returned. She indicated that this is because the company which produced them is located in New Zealand, and that this has made repairs more difficult. Ms. Frank stated that 2 monitors are still working without problem, and that her contact with the company is doing his utmost to help fix the monitors that need repairs.

Consider projects for 2021 23:50

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that she has a map of the trails located at the New Preston Open Space which she intends to send to the Conservation Commission Clerk. The Commission then discussed whether or not it would be viable to encourage the public to make better use of this space given its questionable parking.

Recommendations for Alternate Vacancy

Ms. Payne indicated to the Commission that there is still a vacancy that needs to be filled, and that Mr. Davis who sat in on last month's meeting will not be joining the Commission as an alternate.

Cell Tower 28:30

The Commission asked Ms. Dupuis if there was any news regarding the Kent cell tower. Ms. Dupuis reported that there was no new news regarding this, and then the Commission discussed the viability of having an additional cell tower in Washington. They questioned whether or not a new tower would have any significant impact upon cell reception in the town given its terrain, and discussed the mounting pressure that exists within the town to provide better cell reception despite the problem of effectively improving reception in a town with as many hills as Washington.

Other Business 30:55

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that on January 6, 2021 the Connecticut General Assembly convened and discussed a proposed piece of legislation which would enable towns to generate additional revenue for land conservation and environmental projects throughout the state. Ms. Rawson, who serves on the board for the Connecticut Land Conservation Council explained to the Commission that this legislation has been put forward for the past few years, and that if passed would enable towns to provide more funding to obtain land for conservation easements, and to provide better stewardship of these lands once purchased. She indicated that towns would need to elect to partake in this program and following her summary of the legislation, there was a brief discussion regarding how it would effectively impact easements in Washington if passed.

Motion: *To adjourn the meeting at 5:57 by Ms. Dupuis, seconded by Mr. Macdonald. Passed 5-0.*

Respectfully Submitted,



Dennis Buell
Conservation Commission Clerk
Town of Washington