

WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

June 2, 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. Charles, Mr. Hagenbuch, Ms. Zukauskas, Mr. Lloyd

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:23 and seated Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Mr. Conroy, Ms. Rawson, and Mr. Macdonald.

Approval of Minutes for the May 5 2021 Meeting.

With no corrections or additions for the May 5, 2021 meeting minutes, a motion was passed to accept them.

Motion: To approve the minutes from the May 5, 2021 meeting as written by Ms. Frank, seconded by Mr. Conroy. Passed 5-0.

Hillside Farm Project

Ms. Payne welcomed Mr. Lloyd, and Mr. Hagenbuch to the meeting, informed new members to the Commission that approximately a year ago the Commission had voted to recommend to the town to dedicate \$50,000.00 from the Open Space Fund towards Steep Rock's acquisition of the Hillside Farm on Nettleton Hollow Road, then asked Mr. Lloyd to give a short presentation of how the fundraising for this project is going, and how close Steep Rock is to obtaining this property.

Mr. Lloyd thanked the Commission for having him, and asked Mr. Hagenbuch, the Executive Director of the Steep Rock Association, to give a description of this acquisition.

Mr. Hagenbuch explained to the Commission that this property is located at 397 Nettleton Hollow Road which is designated as a scenic road and that the lot is 86 acres large, 76 of which are in Washington. Mr. Hagenbuch stated that this area is of high strategic conservation value, which made its acquisition a high priority for the Steep Rock Association. He explained that this

land would provide 2 sides of conservation value, one being in agricultural land, and the other being forest conservation. He went on to state that the Steep Rock Association planned to close on this property within approximately 2 months, and that this property will cost \$700,000.00 to purchase, and that grants had covered 90% of this cost. He then went on to explain that they expected to spend an additional \$50,000.00 in frictional costs which he detailed as being legal fees, surveying fees, and appraisals. Mr. Hagenbuch continued by stating that once purchased there would be an estimated \$135,000.00 in capital expenses that would be used for improvements around the property which would include trail development, the creation of a parking area, and the construction of two bridges over Spring Brook. Mr. Hagenbuch stated that presently, \$650,000.00 has been dedicated towards the purchase of this property.

Mr. Hagenbuch then asked if the Commission had any questions regarding this project.

Ms. Frank asked where the road access to this area would be, and was informed by Mr. Hagenbuch that there is a 1-acre building envelop near the house on the property which they would use. Mr. Lloyd stated that road access would exist on the northeast corner of the lot and that it would be accessible from Nettleton Hollow Road.

Ms. Frank then asked if the Steep Rock Association anticipated any concern from neighbors about this acquisition, and was informed by Mr. Lloyd that neighbors are resoundingly supportive of this plan.

Mr. Conroy asked if the barns located near the property are a part of the acquisition and was informed by Mr. Lloyd that they are not. Mr. Conroy then stated that they had mentioned that only a large percentage of this acquisition was in Washington and asked what town or towns the rest of the property is located on. Mr. Hagenbuch stated that the rest of the property is located in Woodbury. Mr. Hagenbuch then shared a map with the Commission which showed its location and size.

With no further questions, Ms. Payne thanked Mr. Hagenbuch and Mr. Lloyd for their presentation and stated she would like to get this on the agenda for a town meeting this fall.

New Preston Falls Historic Info Signs

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that the signs had not been put in place yet, but that according to the First Selectman, Mr. Brinton, the town crews will get these signs in place soon.

New Preston Open Space Management

Ms. Payne asked Ms. Frank if she had any updates or news to share with the Commission regarding the New Preston Open Space Phragmite infestation. Ms. Frank explained that she would like to take pictures of the area that will be treated before New England Aquatic preforms its work in the space, and that once this is done she will contact that company to have them come out to begin work cutting the phragmites. She stated that Mr. Lloyd could possibly help with acquiring the use of a drone for this project.

Conservation Easement Proposal - Chris Charles

Ms. Payne informed Mr. Charles that he had not set up a site visit with the Commission for this proposed easement, and that before any decision could be rendered on this proposed easement a site visit would need to occur.

Mr. Charles stated that he would work out an appropriate time for a site visit, provided a brief description of the area, and asked if the Commission had any questions regarding this proposal.

Ms. Payne asked if Mr. Charles had approached Steep Rock with this proposition, and was informed that he had informed Mr. Hagenbuch about the proposal but that it was his opinion, and that of the property owner, that it would be more sensible for this area to be a Conservation easement.

Ms. Payne then stated that she believed that Juniper Meadow road is a private road for the Bee Brook Crossing residents and asked how this would be utilized for access to this easement. Mr. Charles then explained that access to this area is permitted via this road.

Ms. Frank asked if the bridge on the property is able to handle activity from the easement. Mr. Charles stated that the bridge is engineered to handle 2 fully loaded firetruck tankers simultaneously and explained that given this, he felt confident that the bridge was in no way a safety concern.

Ms. Rawson asked if Mr. Charles could explain to the Commission what area would specifically be made into a Conservation Easement with this proposal. She asked if the entire 13.8-acre lot would be turned into an easement, and Mr. Charles explained that in his proposal, only 6.5 acres would be turned into a Conservation Easement. The Commission then held a short conversation about their confusion regarding the map that had been distributed, and requested that Mr. Charles share a clearer map.

Ms. Frank and Mr. Charles then held a short conversation regarding the visibility of this area from the Pinnacle.

The Commission then agreed to circulate some potential times for a site visit and thanked Mr. Charles for attending the meeting.

Revisit Guidance re Solar Panel Placement

Ms. Payne informed the Commission that they will need to draft a proposal on Solar Panel Zoning regulations to present to the Zoning Commission. She asked that Commission members volunteer for this undertaking and explained that Mr. Furse would also be able to assist in this endeavor.

LID/Low Impact Development and Tree Regs

Ms. Payne explained that the Zoning Commission had yet to consider this proposal.

Western Ct Clean Air Action Report

Ms. Frank asked Mr. Gewanter to provide some information regarding the air quality in Washington. Mr. Gewanter explained that this air quality is very consistent and that there are remarkably low particulate levels in the air in Washington. He then went on to state that it is these particulates that often cause health concerns and that he was continuing to compare Washington's data with that of other regions.

Consider Projects for 2021

No new projects were considered by the Commission.

Recommendations for Vacancy

The Commission did not discuss the alternate vacancy at this time.

Other and or New Business

Ms. Frank asked Mr. Conroy if he had any experience in permitting with his profession. Mr. Conroy stated that has little interaction with the permitting process before posing a question to the Commission. He asked if the Zoning Commission often took a long time to consider recommendations from the Conservation Commission and expressed concern over putting a great deal of effort into the solar panel recommendation if the Zoning Commission would not review the recommendation.

Ms. Payne and Ms. Frank indicated that the Zoning Commission generally reviews recommendations when they are not overwhelmed with other projects.

Mr. Charles thanked the Commission for keeping LID/ and Tree Regulations in their agenda and stated that this was something he hoped to work with in the Sustainability Committee.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:06 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Dennis Buell
Town of Washington
Conservation Commission Clerk
6-7-2021