

WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES September 7, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Mr. Conroy, Ms. Rawson
MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Stagen
ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Horne
CLERK: Mr. Buell
OTHERS: Ms. Zukauskas, Mr. Hileman

Seating of Members and Alternates

Ms. Payne called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM and seated Ms. Payne, Ms. Frank, Ms. Rawson, Mr. Conroy, and Mr. Horne.

Ms. Payne welcomed Mr. Horne to the Commission as an alternate member.

Approval of Minutes of Aug. 3, 2022

With no corrections or suggestions, a motion was passed to accept the August 3, 2022 meeting minutes.

Motion: To accept the August 3, 2022 meeting minutes as written. By Ms. Frank, seconded by Mr. Conroy. Passed 5-0.

Steep Rock Project, Request for Support Letter

Ms. Payne stated that the Steep Rock Association had received funding for the accusation of Pinnacle Cliffs, and explained that they had requested a letter of support from the Conservation Commission regarding this project.

Motion: To submit a letter on behalf of the Conservation Commission in support of the acquisition. By Mr. Conroy, seconded by Ms. Frank. Passed 5-0.

Offer of Conservation Easement on Ives Rd

Ms. Payne stated that a proposal for a new conservation easement had been presented to the Commission. She explained that along with Ms. Frank, she had met with the property owners to review the proposed easement which would be located at 5 Ives Road.

Ms. Rawson asked for clarification on the process for accepting new conservation easements. Ms. Payne stated that the applicant will need to provide a survey of the proposal, and that a lawyer would need to draft a deed restriction. Ms. Payne explained that following this, the Commission would be able to vote to accept or deny the proposed easement and its associated deed agreement. The Commission agreed to set up a site visit for the proposed easement.

New Preston Open Space Management-Phragmites, Ryan Conroy

Mr. Conroy shared an aerial image of the New Preston Open Space which was marked to show where the invasive plants had been cut by New England Aquatic. The Commission discussed the effectiveness of this treatment, how phragmites are spread, and alternative methods of managing the phragmites on this property. Following this discussion, the Commission agreed to attempt this treatment again in the fall.

Tree Regs Progress

Ms. Payne indicated that work on the proposed tree regulations was ongoing.

2023 POCD Ongoing Discussion of Items to be Included in 2023 – Need an In-Person Meeting

Ms. Payne stated that the Land Use Office had made comments on the recommendation section of the Natural Resource Inventory Report. She asked if the Commission would like to schedule a meeting to discuss these comments, the Commission expressed agreement with this suggestion.

Mr. Hileman, Chair of the Planning Commission, informed the Commission that the update to the Natural Resource Inventory Report would need to cover more than the recommendation section. He explained that this update would require funding, consultants, and possibly years to complete. Mr. Hileman then stated that an update to the Natural Resource Inventory Report was one of three requests for the Conservation Commission which would be made by the Planning Commission within the upcoming 2023 P.O.C.D.

Mr. Hileman stated that the second request would be the creation of a town-wide invasive species mitigation strategy. He explained that the Steep Rock Association had developed this type of plan but without a town mitigation strategy, the mitigation efforts of the Steep Rock Association would be less effective. Mr. Hileman went on to explain that this would potentially require funding and consultants to complete.

Mr. Hileman indicated that the third request of the Conservation Commission would be an update to the town's sub-division regulations. He stated that in the past property owners have been allowed to offer to set aside land for conservation purposes, or pay a fee to the town to receive similar benefits. He expressed that in the past, property owners have typically opted to conserve land. He went on to explain that the Planning Commission felt that going forward property owners should be encouraged to pay the fee opposed to conserving land. Further discussion regarding the P.O.C.D. ensued.

Western CT Clean Air Action Report – Linda Frank

Ms. Frank stated that the Western CT Clean Air Action Report would be made available for the Commission to read in the near future. She stated that the air quality had been good, but that this number may have been skewed by lower travel due to the COVID Pandemic, and by lack of information on the current production of energy at the Cricket Valley Energy Plant.

Revisit Guidance re Solar Panel placement

Ms. Payne indicated that she felt the Commission should consider recommendations for solar permitting going forward.

Recommendations for two Alternate Vacancies

Ms. Payne reminded the Commission that there were still two alternate vacancies which would need to be filled on the Commission.

Other and/or Old Business

No other and/or old business was discussed.

Ms. Payne adjourned the meeting at 6:06 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dennis Buell

Dennis Buell
Conservation Commission Clerk
Town of Washington
9-9-2022

A link to access a recording of this meeting is below.

https://townofwashingtongcc-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/dbuell_washingtonct_org/Ehp-Fp4-8HNIIQCRAWENL7QBBbnMpDPb4UqiLSdtTOBYg?e=A6cwjO