

WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES
January 2, 2019

5:15 p.m.

Bryan Memorial Town Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mrs. Payne, Mrs. Frank, Ms. Dupuis

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Sabin, Mrs. Rawson, Mrs. Branson (arrived at 5:35 p.m.)

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. DeLuca, Conservation Commission Clerk
Mr. Bedini, Buildings & Properties Commissioner

NOT PRESENT: Mr. O'Hazo

Mrs. Payne called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m., and notified members that Mr. Bernard resigned his position. Mrs. Payne seated Mrs. Rawson for Mr. Bernard and Mr. Sabin for Mr. O'Hazo

Consideration of Minutes: The minutes from December 5, 2018 were reviewed by members. Ms. Dupuis wanted to clarify that the reference to the Warren cell tower referred to a lease, and that the conversation regarding cell towers that can be created to look like trees did not refer to the Warren matter. Mrs. Rawson wanted to remove the last clause of the last paragraph on Page 4, to focus on the fact that the Conservation Commission would like to invite the new Zoning Enforcement Officer to one of its meetings.

A motion was made by Mr. Sabin to approve the minutes with the clarifications discussed: that Ms. Dupuis was referring to a cell tower lease and that there are no plans for the Warren tower to look like a tree, and that the commission intends to invite the new Zoning Enforcement Officer to one of its meetings. Seconded by Ms. Dupuis and approved 5-0.

Election of Officers for 2019:

A motion was made by Mrs. Frank to appoint Mrs. Payne as Chair to the Conservation Commission. Seconded by Mrs. Rawson and approved 5-0.

A motion was made by Ms. Dupuis to appoint Mrs. Frank as Vice Chair to the Conservation Commission. Seconded by Mrs. Rawson and approved 5-0.

New Preston Falls Update: Mr. Sabin continues to work on the rendering for the New Preston Falls project, and hopes to have it completed by the February meeting.

Mr. Bedini of Buildings & Properties then gave a brief presentation on his research regarding best options for a bridge at the site. The current bridge is in disrepair and will need to be removed. Mr. Bedini reported that replacing the bridge with similar materials would result in a bridge that requires maintenance, and members agreed this could be problematic. He discussed several options and pricing (wood, fiberglass, aluminum, and laminate) and constructing the bridge with aluminum was deemed the best option for the site. This type of bridge can be powder-coated to somewhat blend in with its surroundings, and will meet the requirements to be ADA compliant since the project is a municipal project.

There was a brief discussion about how to fund this project, and members discussed making a presentation to the Board of Selectmen with both a timeline and detailed plans for the project, hoping to obtain approval for funding through the town's capital expenditure budget.

Mrs. Payne made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss real estate and personnel matters. Seconded by Mr. Sabin and approved 5-0.

Mrs. Payne made a motion to end the Executive Session and return to the regular meeting. Seconded by Mr. Sabin and approved 5-0.

Cricket Valley Power Plant Update: Mrs. Frank has ordered the air quality monitoring unit and expects its arrival sometime in mid-January. The Kent School has its piece of equipment in place, though she does not believe they are collecting data yet. As other surrounding towns continue to learn more about concerns over the new plant, support continues to grow. Before a placement site is finalized for Washington, recommendations from the DEEP will be taken into consideration.

Mrs. Frank is also going to continue to pursue using collected data in area schools' science curriculum, and plans to meet with Shepaug High School's Science Chair soon.

Mrs. Payne informed members that the Cricket Valley website is updated regularly and offers useful information.

Phragmites Removal by All Habitat: Mrs. Payne distributed copies of a recent article from *Connecticut Wildlife* regarding phragmites removal. Mrs. Frank reported that she had a discussion with Mr. Bernard about the status of the removal process, and agreed with his assertion that the phragmites can be contained using backpack sprayers, which will eliminate the

need to seek approval from abutting landowners. Members agreed that focusing on the land owned by the town is the main priority, and doing so without pressing its neighbors to join in is the best tack at this time.

(Mr. Sabin needed to leave the meeting, and Mrs. Payne seated Mrs. Branson for Mr. Sabin.)

Review of Site Development Feasibility Plan for 282-292 Bee Brook Road: A new proposal has been made to revise lot lines on the property, and members reviewed the new plans, comparing them to the original proposal. Mrs. Payne read a letter from Brian Neff which confirmed that the proposed revisions would not impact the conservation easement there.

After reviewing the Site Development Feasibility Plan (revision 2, 12/29/18) by Brian Neff, a motion was made by Mrs. Rawson to note that the Conservation Commission concluded that the proposed lot line revision does not violate the terms or the boundaries of the existing conservation easement. Seconded by Ms. Dupuis and approved 5-0.

Tree Cutting Regulations: Members discussed a memo from Mrs. Branson on this subject. Members discussed Kent's zoning regulations and the idea of creating a Horizon Line Overlay District, and whether such a district should again be considered by the Commission. Mrs. Frank felt that Inland/Wetlands might be in a better position to take on this matter, since tree removal impacts properties downhill from any clearing. She also felt that current conditions, with the inordinate amount of rain and mild weather we are experiencing, supports the Conservation Commission's concerns about saving trees. Mrs. Branson readdressed concerns about silviculture and as of right approvals. Mrs. Rawson agreed to do a bit of research on the subject, and hopes to make a brief presentation to members at the next meeting.

Viewscape Guidelines: Following the tree cutting discussion, Mrs. Frank noted that, while nothing can be done if private property owners do not consider the impact of any alterations they make to their landscape, protecting certain specimens of trees or possibly trees of a certain age or size might be a realistic goal for future zoning ordinances. Mrs. Branson agreed that if Zoning Commissioners were made aware of the Conservation Commission's concerns, they might be in a better position to make suggestions to residents when approving permits. Mrs. Payne suggested that Conservation should come up with a simple and clearly articulated proposal for Zoning.

Sustainable CT Initiative: Mrs. Payne reported that the initiative is currently pulling together an action list, and feels optimistic about the items checked off the list/the work that needs to be done. She will update members once a report is available.

Subcommittee Reports & Assignments/Other Business:

Ms. Dupuis had nothing new to report on the Warren cell tower issue.

Mrs. Payne noted the recent news report that Senator Blumenthal is pushing for further health studies before the federal government approves “5G” technology.

Mrs. Payne informed members that a new Zoning Enforcement Officer is currently being trained by Richelle Hodza, and members hope to invite the new officer to one of its upcoming meetings.

Mrs. Payne noted that WEC is still working on its plastic bag ordinance.

There was a brief discussion regarding the Connecticut Land Conservation Council’s proposal for legislation to create a 1% conveyance tax to be paid by the buyer on properties over \$150,000 to support individual town’s open space funds. At this time, only towns specifically named in the legislation, should it be passed, will be able to consider enacting such a tax in the future. At this time, there are eight towns who have expressed interest in being on this list, and members agreed that it would be worthwhile to approach the Selectmen’s Office to see what steps could be taken to include Washington. Mrs. Rawson noted that being on the list would not require that the town impose the tax, but that it would at least be an option should additional funding for open space initiatives be needed in the future.

Mrs. Payne adjourned the meeting at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan DeLuca

Joan DeLuca
Conservation Commission Clerk