

WASHINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES November 7, 2018

5:15 p.m.

Bryan Memorial Town Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mrs. Payne, Mrs. Frank, Mr. Bernard

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Sabin, Mrs. Branson, Mrs. Rawson

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. DeLuca, Conservation Commission Clerk
Mr. Hileman, Planning Commission Chair

NOT PRESENT: Mr. O'Hazo, Mrs. Dupuis

With a quorum established after seating Mr. Sabin and Mrs. Rawson, Mrs. Payne called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Consideration of the Minutes: Mrs. Payne noted that the Minutes needed to be clarified and corrected in two places.

*A motion was made by Mr. Sabin to accept the Minutes with the clarification that the Open Space Fund is to be used for the acquisition and stewardship of the land, not for monitoring as previously noted, and to correct the annual meeting date for the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions from 11/17/19 to 11/17/18.
Seconded by Mrs. Frank and unanimously approved.*

Planning Commission Agenda: Chair of the Planning Commission, Wayne Hileman, attended to clarify an item on that commission's agenda regarding regulations and ordinances that apply to parcels of land that exist in both commercial and R-1 zones. Mr. Hileman reported that when this occurs, the parcel is typically bound by the most restrictive zone, but the Planning Commission hopes to revisit current boundaries to allow some parcels to obtain special permits to use that parcel following commercial regulations, as Marbledale currently allows. After reading a section of the town's planning regulations specifically regarding village centers, he posited that allowing these exceptions will encourage commercial development in Washington's respective villages.

New Preston Falls Update: Mrs. Payne reported that no mowing has occurred recently at the location, nor has any type of fencing been installed. It was also reported that safer steps have been installed near the terraced area.

Mr. Sabin's site plan, already approved by Inland Wetlands, was reviewed by the commissioners in order to come to an agreement as to what the final plan should look like before presenting it to the New Preston Business Association and, ultimately, to the Zoning Commission for approval. Some issues that were discussed were stages of fundraising for the various components of the project (viz., building a bridge and boardwalk, the construction of a 2' stone wall which will encourage residents to remain within reasonable boundaries), as well as limitations of the project's scope (viz., that the area is not a park, but a historical landmark, and future signage should reflect this). Other issues discussed were altering the original design to include ADA compliant steps, and that development of the project should be undertaken in stages, as funding permits.

A motion was made by Mrs. Payne that the Conservation Commission proceed with the site plan developed by Mr. Sabin for the development of New Preston Falls so the plan can be taken in front of the Zoning Commission for approval, also noting that the Inland Wetlands permit is good for five years. Mrs. Frank seconded the motion. After a brief discussion about presenting the plan to the New Preston Business Association first, it was decided to add that consideration to the original motion, and the motion was unanimously passed.

Cricket Valley Power Plant Update: Mrs. Frank reported she has gathered information regarding testing for contaminants and/or pollutants that may be emitted from the Cricket Valley Plant in Dover Plains, New York. Kent School in Kent, Connecticut intends to purchase a large and rather costly device for such testing, while the unit Washington is considering will cost approximately \$4500, paid for through the Open Space Fund. Final placement for the device will be determined in cooperation with surrounding towns, so that as much area as possible is covered, but placing the device at the high school might afford students an educational opportunity, as they would be able to log in to the device to obtain data.

Mr. Bernard suggested that placing the device at a higher elevation might be worth considering, and there was also a discussion about how wind travels in the area, and channels in the valleys.

A question raised by Mr. Sabin was whether any of the towns have considered seeking the opinion of a consultant, such as Bruce Egan, a meteorologist who was in charge of a report on air quality control at Sempra. Mrs. Frank agreed to follow up with Kent School to see if they have any plans to pursue such action.

Mrs. Frank noted that data gathered from the monitoring system will not be legally admissible, but that the data it gathers will provide plenty of baseline numbers in the time prior to the power plant beginning production, and should also serve as an objective measure to provide to the CT DEEP, should the numbers cause concern in the future.

Language for a motion was proposed by Mrs. Frank, and read to the commissioners as follows:

“We move to approve withdrawing \$4500 from the Open Space Fund, which allows for funds to be used for stewardship of the environment, to purchase an Aeroqual AQY air quality monitoring instrument. The AQY will be used to check local air quality before and after the opening of the Cricket Valley 1100mw gas-fired electrical generating plant in Dover Plains, New York. The plant is located 14 miles west of Washington, Connecticut. The Washington Conservation Commission is working with the Western Connecticut Clean Air Action Group, and local conservation commissions have joined together to measure the air quality in the region to assure that our towns will not be adversely affected by pollution from the Cricket Valley Electrical Plant.”

A motion was made by Mrs. Rawson to accept the motion as read by Mrs. Frank. Seconded by Mr. Bernard and unanimously approved.

Phragmites Removal by All Habitat: Mr. Bernard reported that objections have been raised by two property owners that abut the New Preston Open Space. For All Habitat to proceed according to the proposed contract, they will require a signed letter from each abutting property owner stating that they have permission to cross the private land in question. Though these residents currently object to the removal of the phragmites, the area that is phragmites-free is rebounding, with flora and fauna returning to the area.

There was a discussion about the All Habitat contract as it currently reads, and changes that can be made to alleviate some of the residents’ concerns.

A motion was made by Mr. Sabin that Mr. Bernard will contact All Habitat to update and amend the proposed contract, to correct dates of work to be done, and also to stipulate that work performed will be limited to land owned by the town. Seconded by Mrs. Payne. There was a brief discussion of the motion, with Mrs. Rawson questioning how the commission should proceed if neighboring residents continue to object to the spraying of the phragmites, and at what point should the commission consider that proceeding without their cooperation might not make this a sustainable plan. Mr. Bernard and Mr. Sabin were hopeful that the abutting property owners might get on board once they have a better sense of why the invasive species needs to be contained. Mr. Sabin made a concurrent motion that the Conservation Commission continue to work with abutting land owners over the next year to gain their approval to remove phragmites from the area. Seconded by Mrs. Payne and unanimously approved.

Sustainable CT Initiative – Meeting 11/14/18: Mrs. Payne notified members that while she fully supports the initiative, there might be more paperwork involved than she originally anticipated. She hopes to make a determination whether she is able to participate, and will report back to members at the next meeting.

Mrs. Payne adjourned the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joan DeLuca", written in black ink. The signature is fluid and connected, with a prominent initial "J".

Joan DeLuca

Conservation Commission Clerk