Town of Washington

**Bryan Memorial Town Hall**

**Washington Depot, CT 06794**

####  Washington Conservation Commission

**Minutes July 1, 2015**

5:00 PM Main Level Meeting Room

Members Present: Susan Payne, Phil Markert, Randy Bernard, Diane Dupuis

Members Absent: Linda Frank

Alternates Present: Betsy Corrigan, Ann Quackenbos, Dirk Sabin

Alternates Absent:

Staff Present: Janice Roberti

Ms. Payne, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

Seated: Susan Payne, Diane Dupuis, Randy Bernard, Phil Market, Betsy Corrigan, Dirk Sabin, Ann Quackenbos

Consideration of the minutes

The Commission considered the regular meeting minutes of the Conservation Commission for June 3, 2015.

Correction, Page 2, last paragraph, New Preston Open Space/New Preston Falls, section title should read New Preston Open Space.

MOTION: To accept the June 3, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Conservation Commission as amended, by Ms. Quackenbos, seconded by Mr. Bernard, passed by 5-0 vote.

New Preston Open Space

Ms. Payne mentioned that there is a New Preston Stroll on July 4, 2015. Ms. Payne suggested Washington participating next July 4th. Steep Rock asked Mr. Bernard to set up a table for this event. Steep Rocks sells memberships to raise money. Ms. Payne told Mr. Bernard that afterwards he can let the Commission know how we can fit in. The Commission then discussed how to promote the open space:

* Conservation should develop promotional materials because not very many people know about the area. Perhaps New Preston Village would support this endeavor by helping with printing.
* Get the community involved.
* One commissioner’s opinion is that the residents there like the area the way it is without a lot of fanfare.
* The Open Space and The Falls are town properties. We should try to develop some ownership for them in the New Preston Community.
* Ms. Payne told the commissioners that at the first meeting with the residents after the land was purchased, the residents who border the area expressed concern about having too many signs and too much promotion. We should take this into consideration.
* The brochure can talk about the cultural diversity, provide a description of the botanical diversity, wildlife and the fact that you can walk this beautiful area.
* Enlighten people about the ongoing knotweed invasive control project.
* Perhaps creating two separate maps - one showing public space and one showing private space would be helpful. The New Preston business community would appreciate such a resource.
* The Washington Depot and Washington Green area have readily available information for the public but New Preston does not. Perhaps we could collaborate with the historical museum and include a brief history.

Ms. Payne talked to Mark Lyon regarding getting the DOT to repair the broken bridge at the 202 entrance to the New Preston Falls. Mr. Lyon will continue to pursue this.

 Horizon Line Protection Map & Regulations for Zoning/Continue discussion. – Dirk Sabin

Mr. Sabin explained an overlay map he created using maps from The Natural Resource Inventory. The best thing to do (based on our last conversation) would be to overlay it on top of the slope map because we talked about encompassing any slope area over 15%. The areas that are stippled are the ridgeline protection zones which pretty much encompass all the areas that are 15%. There are some areas that are over the 15% up in here (pointing to an area on the map) but they are on plateau lands. Mr. Sabin told the commission he was looking at areas that are visible from the road but also including the slope categories. The slope map is underneath. Red lines are a combination of encompassing the Slope Map and also the Peaks and Prominences Map. Again, these would be the areas that fall under the regulations. It’s not that anyone would be prohibited from doing anything but residents are going to have to comply with certain regulations.

New Preston Open Space – Betsy Corrigan

Ms. Corrigan went to the New Preston Open Space the week of June 28, 2015 and noticed that the area was even more botanically diverse than she first thought. Each time she goes to the area, she finds more species. There is a native rose species there but it’s not just a multi flora rose so it’s important to be careful when we do control. Ms. Corrigan said she would just continue with the path around the perimeter. In terms of managing it, Ms. Corrigan’s opinion is that it should be managed for insects because of the high plant diversity. It is probably a given that there are a lot of insects in the area. She did see a lot of butterfly species. The Xerces Society protects wildlife through the conservationof invertebrates and their habitat. They recommend mowing sites like this approximately every three years and doing it on a rotational basis. Mowing in November is best because it’s important to leave the dried plant stalks in place for the winter as the song birds feed on the seeds. A suggestion was made that there should be a diagram for the town crew so they know where to mow and when. Ms. Corrigan commented on the large spectrum from wetlands to dry open sites. The slope area might be a turtle egg laying area. There have been reports of box turtles there. Ms. Corrigan said the bird life is incredible and again it’s because of the diversity of habitat. It might be nice to have a map showing what’s there. Although the woodland walk has promise for seeing some rare species, it is suggested not to do the walk at this time. Regarding phragmites removal in the open space, Mr. Bernard will contact the company All Habitat for a quote.

Walker Brook Degradation – Randy Bernard

Mr. Bernard said the conclusion he came to is that he wants to talk to the road maintenance crews about not putting down salt on the lower part of the roads that come down to Walker Bridge, thus limited winter maintenance. Shinar Mountain Road is plowed but not salted. A posted sign says there is no winter maintenance. Mr. Bernard said he thinks it’s a great practice depending on where the houses are located. This practice might save the town road salting and would certainly save the stream habitat. Wherever the salting ends, it’s important to make sure you have a good diversion off the road to take any runoff of that salt into the woods and not into the stream. He thinks it is a good solution and a good first step.

Cell Tower Update – Diane Dupuis

Ms. Dupuis updated the Commission on the status of the cell tower. Homeland Towers and

AT & T were the companies who put the original docket through. Ms. Dupuis called The Siting Council and was told that Homeland Towers is now Insight Communications. According to the original docket the tower was supposed to be operational by September 2014. In July AT & T sent a letter to Mark Lyon M. Lyon a letter asking for an 18 month extension on top of the 9/15 date. ML going to the BOS and has a call into The Siting Council to see if there is anything they can do about the additional 18 month delay. Ray Vergati, site development manager for [Homeland Towers](http://www.newstimes.com/search/?action=search&channel=local&inlineLink=1&searchindex=gsa&query=%22Homeland+Towers%22), said his company, which is working in tandem with AT&T keeps advocating to Verizon that they would greatly benefit is they came in and located on the Washington tower.

Other Business – Susan Payne

Ms. Payne briefed the Commission about the 132 Calhoun site visit with Rod Pleasants. The Pillows built a pool house down below at the site. Ms. Payne mentioned the concern about the buildup of dirt and rocks. It was thought that the house was going to be built on the dirt platform but Mr. Pleasants explained that this is not the case at all. The main house will be 12 feet lower than shown on the original plans. It will be 12 feet lower than street level.

As there was no further business to discuss, M. Payne adjourned the meeting at 5:45 PM.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Roberti

Conservation Commission Clerk