

Minutes
Watertown Conservation Commission
Town Council Chambers
Wednesday April 4, 2018

Conservation Commission Members Present: Leo Martin, Patrick Fairbairn, Maria P. Rose, Charles C. Bering, Jamie O'Connell

Commission Members Absent: Marylouise Pallotta McDermott

Staff Present: Steve Magoon, Susan C. Jenness (Adopted June 6, 2018)

Martin Chaired.

- 1. Informational Meeting-** Matt Shuman Department of Public Works (DPW) Engineer on Storm water

Shuman, Engineer for the town appeared for an informational slide show presentation on Storm water at the request of the Conservation Commission, (CC).

He reviewed that Watertown's storm water is collected by catch basins and drains directly into the Charles River, rather than to Deer Island for treatment like some surrounding communities. This makes Watertown a Municipal Separate Storm water Sewer System operating under an MS4 Permit.

Shuman listed typical storm water pollutants as follows.

- Oils and Gasoline
- Trash
- Leaves and Mulch
- Sediment
- Bacteria
- Nutrients
- Heavy Metals.

Shuman explained the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires that Watertown comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Storm water Permitting Program (NPDES). The 6 minimum control measures to regulate the NPDES program were listed by Shuman as Public Education, Public Involvement, Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination, Construction Runoff Control, Post Construction Storm water Management and Pollution Prevention.

Shuman reported that the regulatory mechanisms within the municipal system are the Storm Water Management and Erosion Control Ordinance passed in February 2016 and the Zoning Ordinance and Wetland Protection Act (WPA).

Shuman reported the DPW has current plans to formalize DPW policies, and provide storm water requirements that fit the needs of the town, and meet EPA regulatory requirements of the Phase II NPDES permit. He explained that he expects the ordinance will require permitting on any project that disturbs 5,000 sq. feet, or increases imperviousness by more than 500 sq. feet, or creates or modifies a direct connection to the MS4 discharge system.

Shuman reviewed statistics on the residential permits issued, commercial and parking lot permits issued from April 2016-March 2017 and April 2017 to March 2018.

He reported that developments are using a variety of methods to achieve storm water goals, including infrastructure and green infrastructure, as well as hidden infrastructure systems, bio-retention and rain gardens and de-paving.

Shuman invited members of the CC to contact him with any questions or concerns at the Department of Public Works.

2. Informational Meeting- Organic Fertilizer Presentation

Fred and Pam Newcombe, owners of PJC Organics appeared to present information to the CC about organic turf. Larry and Pam each spoke about specific aspects of organic turf care.

Fred Newcombe explained that PJC Organics manufactures and distributes organic turf care products for landscapers, schools and municipalities for effective organic turf care program.

Pam Newcombe explained that soil chemistry and appropriate cultural practices are key aspects of creating the foundation for natural and effective turf care, which she said is the safest turf for the upcoming generations to come.

Fred and Pam reported that there is ample information available up on their web site for anyone who wants more information about their presentation.

3. Minutes- March 12, 2018 Meeting

Fairbairn said he had a statement that was written out that he was requesting to have inserted into the March 12, 2018 CC Minutes. He explained that the statement he was submitting to the clerk that night was based upon a conversation he had that took place after he had made his comments at the March 12, 2018 meeting.

“Fairbairn said that when confronted with this once in a lifetime opportunity to reconsider the design of Arsenal Park, he was inclined to think big and see how the original design might be modified to meet the current recreational need on a town-wide basis. He admitted to having learned only belatedly that Arsenal Park had been founded with a mission to promote the relatively tranquil experience of informal competition and

relaxation in a natural setting. He observed that the park redesign remained true to that mission and improved on it in several important ways.”

After a review of the minutes a motion was made to adopt the minutes as modified by the CC.

Motion: Rose made a motion to adopt the minutes as modified. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached adopting the minutes of the March 12, 2018 meeting.

4. **Report-** Follow Up on Supplementation to Whitney Hill Annual Report from comments made at March 12, 2018 meeting.

Fairbairn had prepared a list of the following items- Education, Citizen Science, Publicity, Site Improvement/Maintenance and Habitat Management.

Fairbairn explained that he felt the Department of Public Works (DPW) may go along with some of the items on the list, and that he and Rose were working together to supplement the 2017 Annual Report on Whitney Hill. Fairbairn said he wanted to add trail stewards as a potential conceptual idea at Whitney Hill moving forward.

Rose handed out the memorandum she had prepared to the CC. She explained that she saw Fairbairn’s document as a statement of goals to work towards, and saw the memo she was working on as a statement to Town Council addressing points that the CC needed help with at the current time.

The items on Rose’s list were Education, Recreation, Maintenance, and Policy.

Rose suggested that the CC could request a meeting with DPW through Magoon if they need to discuss any issues with that area of town operations. Martin commented Rose’s submission was a summary of what the CC wanted to recommend to Town Council in the upcoming year.

Fairbairn pointed out that the list he created is more of a shopping list of categories that may require some collaboration with other agencies and residents as well as the DPW. Martin agreed that a Stewards Trust or Friends of the Park could help with some of the items listed on Fairbairn’s list.

Rose asked Magoon to comment on the memo she had prepared. Magoon agreed that he could arrange a meeting with the DPW to discuss items when necessary. He explained that he liked the idea of addressing soil erosion control issues but that he would be in favor of removing reference to wood chips as they could be slippery when wet. He said that he preferred that the CC say they will pursue the possibility of a tree climbing event until after the town has researched the activity on a more thorough level.

Rose mentioned that she had researched responsible dog ownership in Watertown and found that licensed dogs are allowed on leash in Watertown in general. The CC decided to delete the reference asking town council about the policy on dogs at Whitney Hill.

Martin clarified that there are barrels at each entrance that should be emptied and Rose said she would add that to the memo in an appropriate space.

Fairbairn suggested he was in favor of promoting biological control of potential nuisance animals like rabbits, mice and squirrels by their mammalian predators e.g. weasels, foxes, coyotes. Fairbairn pointed out that the loose boulders in the park could be clustered to create refuge and breeding dens for those predators.

O'Connell suggested selected members of the CC could meet with DPW to discuss the materials that would be available for them to obtain for re-use as a first step. Then the second step could be a discussion around creative re- use of the materials to support the habitat, which would take place among members of the CC once they know what materials they have available for use.

Public Comments

Elodia Thomas of Marion Rd. said that the public would really like to have the tree climbing event at another public park. She explained that she was receiving feedback from her neighbors and friends that Whitney Hill is the only natural habitat in Watertown, and it should be protected from recreational use.

Public Comments Closed

Rose will work on rewording and reconfiguring the document for town council and the CC will review the new version at their next meeting.

5. Agent report

- a. **Mass DEP's Circuit Rider Program-** Kimberly Roth, New Circuit Rider splitting time between Northeast and Southeast Office providing support to Conservation Commissions and town staff regarding implementation of the MA Wetlands Protection Act Regulations.
- b. **Bridge Replacement Project-** Martin reported that the new date for the installation is expected to be May 14, 2018.
- c. **Arsenal Park Planning Process-** Magoon reported that once the new configurations based on the suggestions of the CC are available from CDM, the town would like to hold an open house for the public to come and see the plans in person. Once that takes place, the plans will come back for a final review before the CC.

- d. Search for new Conservation Agent/Tree Warden- Magoon reported the town is still searching to fill the position vacated by Chris Hayward.
- e. 400 Pleasant St. Tree Pruning- Magoon commented that some trees along the path were being pruned away from the bridge that was in the jurisdiction of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the permitting authority of the site.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.