

Minutes
Watertown Conservation Commission
Town Council Chambers
Wednesday, January 18, 7:30 p.m.

Conservation Commission Members Present: Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Leo G. Martin, Patrick Fairbairn, Louis Taverna, Maria P. Rose, Charles C. Bering

Commission Members Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness

Pallotta McDermott chaired.

Pallotta McDermott announced that Hayward, who is also the Tree Warden for the Watertown was named the recipient of the prestigious Seth H. Swift Tree Warden of the Year Award for 2017. She read the following announcement at the opening of the meeting.

Christopher J. Hayward, the Tree Warden, and Conservation and Historical Preservation Agent, has been awarded the **2017 Seth H. Swift Tree Warden of the Year** award by the Massachusetts Tree Warden and Forrester Association (**MTWFA**). Hayward received this award last week at their annual meeting and award ceremonies which took place in Sturbridge Massachusetts. He was nominated by Louise Civetti who is both a resident here in Watertown, as well as a fellow colleague here in the Administration Building. Louise nominated Chris for his tireless efforts in his official capacity as the tree warden for the town. Noted most especially in his nomination were his activities that involve community outreach and educating the public about the science of tree conservation, which is one of the most precious resources here in the town. After Chris was nominated by Louise, his nomination application was reviewed by the (**MTWFA**) awards committee and Hayward was then selected out of the tree wardens from the 351 municipalities here in the state of Massachusetts as the recipient of the **2017 Seth H. Swift Tree Warden of the Year** award.

Pallotta McDermott asked everyone to please join her in congratulating Chris for this outstanding recognition of his hard work.

1) Minutes from November 2, 2016 meeting

The minutes from November 2, 2016 were reviewed. After minor modifications a motion was made to accept the minutes.

Motion: Taverna made a motion to approve the minutes of November 2, 2016 with minor modification. Bering seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to adopt the minutes of the November 2, 2016

2) Review of 2017 Meeting Dates and Filing Deadlines for the Conservation Commission.

After a review of the Meeting Dates and Filing Deadlines for the Conservation Commission a motion was made.

Motion: Taverna made a motion to approve the 2017 Meeting Dates and Filing Deadlines for the Conservation Commission. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached adopting the dates and filing deadlines proposed for the 2017 year.

CC member Taverna excused himself from the meeting.

3) New Business

a. Arsenal Park Connector- Livable Street Alliance and Gideon Schreiber to discuss the multi-use connector through Arsenal Park, connecting the Watertown - Cambridge Greenway and the DCR Charles River Paths.

Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner from Community Development and Planning and 'Nidhi Gulati from LivableStreets Alliance were both in attendance to present a proposal for the Arsenal Park Connector.

Schreiber explained that Arsenal Park sits at the nexus of several pedestrian and bike paths that not only connect the neighborhoods within Watertown to the Park, but also connect to regional assets such as the Minuteman Trail, Fresh Pond and the City of Boston. Today, however, the park acts as more of a barrier than a connector between inland trails (Watertown Greenway and Spur) and the Dr. Paul Dudley White Paths along the Charles River.

At the present time there are several informal/unpaved connections along the Amphitheatre in Arsenal Park that demonstrate a desire for connectivity between the Park and the Charles River. Right now with the unpaved conditions, these paths lead to soil erosion at the edges of the park.

Some valuable benefits of improving access to the park are the following:

- Improved connections between the park and the community that surrounds it.
- Enhanced access to the Amphitheater and potential to promote more use by drawing more eyes to the asset.
- An opportunity to improve ADA compliance for the Amphitheatre.
- Improved storm water Management and reverse erosion near the stage.
- An opportunity to activate this area of the Park, especially the Amphitheater by working with the Arsenal Center for the Arts and other local institutions.

Some benefits directed to the immediate neighborhood are the following:

- Filling a critical gap in the greenway network in Watertown, this acts as a local as well as regional amenity.
- By improving connections between Arsenal Park and other Regional Destinations like the Commander's Mansion, Riverfront Park and Braille Trail, and Greenough Greenway.

There were some positive comments from the Conservation Commission members. Rose mentioned the Wellesley Bike Path that was paved with some porous material that she thought looked and seemed like an excellent option for the path, but expressed it must be costly.

Dan Driscoll, Senior Project Manager for the DCR was present and explained that cost wise the product used to pave the Wellesley Bike Path would cost only about 25% more than other more common products used for paving similar paths. Driscoll said that using the product described by Rose would require more extensive digging and would be more feasible for a larger space.

Pallotta McDermott asked Driscoll to participate in the planning process of the pathway. Driscoll indicated that he has been involved in discussions with Planning and is ready to assist in any way that is needed.

Gulati assured the CC and members of the public that during the process of expanding the Athena Campus, the DCR is being asked to open Talcott Ave. and various alternatives to address the additional traffic from Athena. She stated that the Arsenal Connector will respond directly to the increase in traffic flow by offering options for slower moving traffic which are also safe for travelers.

At the present time Schreiber is currently working with contractors who are involved in projects that are developing at either end of the Arsenal Park Connector. Schreiber explained that he is attempting to assess both possibilities for

funding, while also exploring and blending options that would bring both sides of the development together in a harmonious way.

Schreiber explained that he would like to make a return to the CC with Gulati when they have a design in concept for the Arsenal Park Connector. Hayward indicated that Steve Magoon, Director of Planning may be preparing to form a sub-committee to design the concept plan.

Schreiber agreed to continue to work with Hayward on the planning process selected by Magoon and proposed to return to the CC when a concept is available for presentation.

b. MACC-Review of Pipeline letter and invitation to sign on with the 30 other Massachusetts Conservation Commissions.

After a brief discussion a motion was made to support the MACC Pipeline letter.

Motion: Rose made a motion to support the MACC Pipeline Letter.
Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to support the MACC Pipeline Letter.

c. MACC 60th year anniversary- Discussion on creating a slide to represent the Watertown Conservation Commission for annual conference presentation by February 17, 2017.

CC discussed options to create a slide for the MACC 60th year Anniversary. Fairbairn offered a photo of his plot maps from the Whitney Hill Project with local students at the high school. Other CC members discussed the potential of submitting something with photographs. The CC has until February 17th to make a submission to MACC.

d. Review of Whitney Hill Report for 2016 - submitted by P. Fairbairn, December 30, 2016.

Fairbairn submitted a draft form of the Annual Whitney Hill Report to the Conservation Office which was distributed to members of the CC in their meeting packages.

Pallotta McDermott commended Fairbairn for his efforts with respect to preparing the report. She commented that he did an excellent job preparing the report.

Motion: Martin made a motion to accept the report. Rose seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached accepting the report.

Hayward explained that the report would be posted on line for the public to view on the CC web page. He also stated that a notice of the public meeting would be mailed out to abutters informing them of the public meeting to discuss Whitney Hill.

e. Recap of Community Preservation Act election results - Maria Rose.

Rose recapped the election process of the Community Preservation Act which she reported was elected in by 60% of the vote. Rose stated that there was only one precinct that did not vote the CPA in.

Rose explained that forming a CPA Committee would be one of the next steps for the town, and suggested that a member of the CC would be chosen or would volunteer to participate in that process.

Rose explained that she worked with a group of individuals get the CPA Ordinance written for the town. Rose said that the feedback she has received about the ordinance has been positive and that it has been referred to as one of the best CPA Ordinances written to date.

Rose announced that Fairbairn was the winner of the Metro West Collaborative Award for his work promoting the Community Preservation Act in Watertown.

Hayward urged members of the CC to wait and allow Michael Driscoll, the Town Manager, and Steven Magoon, the Director of Community Development and Planning and Assistant Town Manager to make an announcement about forming a committee for the CPA.

f. Review of Letter from K & P regarding Ballot Questions and Political Activity for Town Officials, employees and members of boards and commissions.

Hayward highlighted some key points about Ballot Questions and Political Activity from the letter that was written by K & P, the law firm representing the town.

Hayward asked if any CC members had questions or needed clarification of any part of the letter. There were no questions from the CC.

Hayward asked CC members to be in touch if ever there were any questions and that if he did not have the answer, he would happy to obtain one.

- g. Conflict of Interest Law Training for 2017-2018 - Linked emailed out on December 28th, 2016 - Certification to be filed in the Conservation Office by April 7, 2017.**

Hayward reminded CC members to take their on-line Conflict of Interest Law Training, and to be sure to turn in their certificates to the Conservation Office by April 7, 2017.

- h. Suggested items for the February 2017 CC meeting Agenda.**

- 1. Discussion on the report made by Fairbairn and notification of abutters and general public regarding Annual Whitney Hill Report.**
- 2. Archiving selected CC documents into an online archive for easy access.**
- 3. Discussion on ideal CC member candidate.**

Motion: Rose made a motion for a status report on the vacancies now open on the CC. Martin seconded the motion.

Vote: Four of the five remaining CC members were in favor of requesting a status report, while one CC member present was not in favor of requesting a status report.

Motion: Rose made a motion to close the meeting. Martin seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to close the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned.

