



City of Watertown

Conservation Commission
Administration Building
149 Main St.
Watertown, MA 02472

Maria P. Rose, Chair
Leo G. Martin, Member
Charles C. Bering, Member
Jamie O'Connell, Member
Darya Mattes, Member
Rachel Danford, Member

MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, June 7, 2023, 7:00 PM, Remote Meeting on Zoom

Conservation Commission Members Present: Leo Martin, Maria Rose, Charles Bering, Rachel Danford, Jamie O'Connell, and Darya Mattes (arrived at 7:20 pm).

Absent: N/A

Also Present: Pam Phillips, Bryce Spare, Michael McKenney, K. Brown, Scott Fischer, K.T. Perrera, Will Twombly, Angie Kounelis, Laura Laich, Paul Kwiatkowski, Isaetchum, George Bolesent, Mike Albano, Elodia Thomas, and Toby Berkinman.

Staff Present: Katie Swan, Conservation Agent, Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

Martin chaired the meeting.

1. Informational Meeting: Friends of Bees - presentation on Bee City

Pam Phillips from the Friends of Bees, citizen organization, presented on the benefits of Watertown registering to become a Bee City (this was presented to the Conservation Commission in 2019). The presentation was refresher and discussion of the information about the formal process of registration and maintaining status. O'Connell said she would investigate options for setting up the practices of a registered Bee City in Watertown which was not included in prior discussion of becoming official in 2019. Since the first

presentation in 2019, the City has planted numerous pollinator gardens, and taken other steps to align with the practices of Bee Cities.

Overall, the members of the Conservation Commission urged Phillips to find out more about the obligations, and to investigate other municipalities such as Lexington who are Bee City certified to find out what they are doing and plan of action.

Elodia Thomas suggested Phillips to consult with the new Budget Report issued by the City Manager's Office to look for information that might lead to a sponsoring committee in the City for Phillips to work with. O'Connell urged Phillips to reach out to Laurel Schwab, former Conservation Agent, who is now overseeing the Climate and Energy plan for the City.

2. Informational Meeting: Whitney Hill proposed trail work discussion

A presentation was made by Maria Rose to review the proposed trail work at Whitney Hill that would be taking place. Rose expressed gratitude and respect to Patrick Fairbairn, former Conservation Commissioner, had focused on Whitney Hill and all the activities taking place in stewardship of the Park. Rose explained that Fairbairn began working with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) about 1.5 years ago to discuss options for work they could be hired to do. Including to improve the safety and conditions of Whitney Hill, enlisting a work crew from the SCA, under the supervision of Bryce Spare. Rose also emphasized that if this work project went well, SCA may be hired to do other projects in the future on other areas of the Park.

The scope of this project was to reduce erosion control issues, increase public safety, and encourage use of the main trail to protect tree roots at the bottom of the trail towards Marion Road. The work will likely be done August 1st - 10th by 5-6 trail crew members include building block steps and placing pea stone between the steps for drainage/stabilize the steps.

O'Connell inquired if the steps would lead to a natural path towards Marion Road. Bryce Spare explained it would, and to further protect tree roots, they could place gravel in a way to direct visitors to stay on to the path.

Public Comments:

Elodia Thomas asked how many members have had walked the path at Whitney Hill? She explained that the area by the Marion Road entrance was the most slippery and hazardous during winter and spring seasons. Rose thanked Thomas for sharing her thoughts and explained this area was the steepest part of the path. Rose asked about the bottom of the steps, and it was explained that area will be filled in with mulch. Rose said

she intends to reach out to the Tree Warden and walk the site with him to make further assessment about the trees.

Katie Patterson thanked Conservation Commission members and asked if the steps would be cleared in the winter and how likely they would hold up. Rose explained several steps has a platform that will be designed to drain towards the sides. Bryce explained further that drainage will be draining towards the hillside. Patterson asked if they intended to install a railing. Bryce said that was possible, however it was his understanding residents sought to keep the space as natural as possible.

Toby from Marlborough Terrace said he thought this project sounded like the first step of a of a larger plan. He suggested the work crew inspect the smaller paths and do some work to clear away fallen trees and branches that can be hazardous to the visitors. Rose explained that in the context of the natural habitat, fallen trees are a refuge to the members of the habitat and so there were special considerations about moving what had fallen inside the park.

Carol, resident, stated that she thought that in the winter, the steps might end up being a concern. Rose responded that the snow should not be a problem, but the melting snow that could refreeze. Carol said she had been involved in a cleanup day in the past at Whitney Hill in 2018 by Watertown Gives Back and she offered to participate in another one in the future. Thomas asked members of the Conservation Commission to be sure to make steps at least five (5) feet in width and hope Fairbairn's work with the students and ecological studies of the site would continue.

3. Public Hearing: Notice of Intent (Continued to the July 12, 2023) -- located off 0 Arlington Street, between 71 Arlington Street and 15 Arlington Street (DEP #: 321-0186) - construction of a 41,289 square feet (sf) of pervious parking area to grade and pave the north side of Sawins Pond, extending from the existing paved parking lot, within the 100 foot Buffer Zone of Vegetated wetlands and Inland Bank and locally regulated 150 foot Buffer Zone. Polina Safran, Representative from SWCA, Max Hatziliades, Owner.

Martin informed the members this hearing had been continued to July 12, 2023, to allow for additional progress to be made.

4. Public Hearing: Request for Certificate of Compliance – Mount Auburn Cemetery, Willow Pond (DEP #: 321-0161) -- The repair and improvement of stormwater discharges on the northwestern shore of Willow Pond within the cemetery grounds. Scott Fisher, SWCA, Representative.

Scott Fisher was present to review the conditions of the site at Mt. Auburn Cemetery, for the NOI filed in August 2015, and completed in October of 2015. Fisher explained that two 12" x 18" stormwater swales were designed and created off the Azalea Path. A new

structure was installed to collect sediment during large rain events and reduce soil erosion into the pond.

Fisher explained that native wetland plant species were added to the project area which provided habitat and aesthetic value to the pond. The landscape architect of the project was involved to oversee the contractors during installation of the additions made to the landscape. Fisher shared photos of the before and after the work was complete.

Stormwater maintenance has been occurring two times per year since 2015. A site visit occurred with Agent Swan in April this year. The O&M plan was filed in perpetuity and the maintenance has been occurring on schedule. The record keeping has been kept up and reports have been issued as mandated.

Fisher has maintained routine regular visits of the site three (3) times per year to remove sediment and pull invasive plants by hand. A copy of the O&M plan has been shared with Swan. Swan had no additional comments to add.

Motion: Rose made a motion to issue the Certificate of Compliance on the completion of this project. Mattes seconded the motion made by Rose.

Roll Call: A roll call was taken, and all agreed with the motion made by Rose.

5. Public Hearing: Request for Certificate of Compliance -- 650 Pleasant Street (DEP#: 321-0171).

Laura Laich, from VHB, was present to review the existing conditions at the site. She said they had appeared before the Conservation Commission last fall and a statement was raised about a commitment to repair plantings after the winter, along with a mowing and maintenance schedule to resolve issues at the site.

In December, Michael McKenney, ArrantaBio, went on a site visit with Martin and Swan, when there were limited plantings to inspect. On the site visit in May, the stormwater basin looked good, and mulch was added to the areas where the grass was not growing, and crushed stone was added around the trees. ArrantaBio held a Clean Up Day within the Riverfront Area. Martin agreed the project site was in good shape.

Motion: Bering made a motion to issue a certificate of compliance after the satisfactory completion of the project. Danford seconded the motion.

Roll Call: A roll call was taken, and all agreed with the motion made by Bering.

6. Commission Discussion and Vote: Nominations and vote for new chair and vice chair.

Martin to step down as the Chair. Members discussed possible replacements to step in as Chair. They also discussed whether a Vice Chair would be selected.

Motion: O'Connell made a motion to elect Maria Rose as the new Chair for the Conservation Commission. Mattes seconded the motion.

Roll Call: All members were polled and agree with the motion made by O'Connell.

Rose further stated she would Chair for the next year or two.

7. Commission Discussion: Review and vote of finalized language for electronic signatures for Watertown Conservation Commission.

Members of the Conservation Commission voted to authorize the finalized language for electronic signatures.

Motion: Rose made a motion to accept the finalized language. Bering seconded the motion.

Roll Call: A roll call was taken, and all members agreed with the motion made by Rose.

8. Acceptance of Minutes:

Review and acceptance of Minutes from the April 12, 2023, Conservation Commission meeting.

Motion: Rose made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected by O'Connell and Rose. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Roll Call: A roll call was taken, and all agreed with the motion made by Rose.

Review and acceptance of Minutes from the May 3, 2023, Conservation Commission meeting.

Motion: O'Connell made a motion was made to accept the minutes of the May 3, 2023, meeting. Rose seconded the motion.

Roll Call: A roll call was taken, and all agreed to accept the minutes of the May 3, 2023, meeting.

9. Agent Report:

A. CPC report -- no update

- B. 23 Elm Street (DEP#: 321-0172) – Swan went on a site visit in May to look at the site. Outside construction will be done in June/July and landscaping to start this summer. Swan shared with project manager that the OOC is to expire in January 2024 and plan to submit a request for an extension for this fall.
- C. DCR Vegetation Management Program (Lower Charles River Basin) (DEP#: 321-0185) – Swan shared an update that the invasive plant species removal is to continue this summer along Blue Heron Trail and Cannalonga Park.
- D. DCR Aquatic Vegetation Management Program (Upper Charles River/Lakes Region) (DEP#: 321-0179 and 321- 0183) – Swan shared an update that aquatic invasive plant removal work will be focused on the Lakes District region of the Charles and part of the upper basin (at the Waltham Dam and Newton Dam).
- E. 350 Pleasant Street (DEP#: 321-0163) – Swan shared that she went on a site visit in May with the Landscape Architect to look at the plantings for the review of the request for a Certificate of Compliance. Swan noted that there are some larger plantings that need to be replaced due to drought and shade. Suggested to landscape architect to submit a request for an extension to address the plantings for the July Conservation Commission meeting.