



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Conservation Commission
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

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Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Member
Charles C. Bering, Member
Patrick W. Fairbairn, Member
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MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, November 6, 2019, 7:00 PM in the Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room

Conservation Commission Members Present: Colleen Egan, Maria Rose, Jamie O'Connell, Charles Bering, Patrick Fairbairn

Absent: Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Leo Martin

Also Present: Pam Phillips, Friends of Bees, Elliot Friedman, Lisa Feltner, Town Councilor

Staff Present: Laurel Schwab, Conservation Agent, Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

Rose Chaired in Martin's absence

1. **Welcome-** Introductions to Colleen Egan the new member of the Conservation Commission.

Members of the Commission welcomed Colleen Egan as the newest member of the Conservation Commission. The group took a few moments each to exchange information about their backgrounds with her. They all expressed how happy they were to finally have her on the board of their commission.

2. **Bee City USA Presentation**

Pam Phillips is a 20 year resident of Watertown, and a long- time member of the Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice and the Environment. <http://watertowncitizens.org/>. She asked to be placed on the agenda so that she could speak with the Conservation Commission about them becoming a member of Bee City USA.

Philips made a presentation to the board which began by explaining her trajectory into Bee City USA. She became more conscientious of the bee population during a phase of Colony Collapse Disorder, and since that period she has learned there are over 12 species in Watertown. She said that pesticides are a major concern to their well-being. She also explained that habitats may be cultivated to enhance the environment creating healthier supportive places for bees and other pollinator species to live.

She explained that one of the reasons why she thought the Conservation Commission was a good group to speak with is that many of the best plants for bees would be found in and around the wetlands, which is under the jurisdiction of the commission.

Phillips said that Bee City USA is a national network made up of Towns and Cities who have agreed to become pollinator friendly and have also met the following requirements to join this national network;

- Having a *resolution for the Town's long term participation* in Bee City USA.
- Making *active improvements* in the town for the habitat as it relates to bees.
- Having an official *plan for plant management* that supports pollinator habitat improvements.
- *Designating a department* of the town to oversee and manage the process.
- *Forming a sub-committee* of about 4 people to support the program.
- Payment of a \$300- *program fee*.

Phillips explained that Westfield and North Adams are Bee Campuses. She said that Durham New Hampshire's, Bee City USA is supported by the Agricultural Commission in their town, and they have held events such as *Farm Day* and *Rethink Your Lawn Day*.

O'Connell agreed to investigate whether or not Watertown already has a native plant species list that they could integrate pollinator friendly plants into.

Philips also mentioned that the Town's Adopt and Island Program that is run by the Department of Public Works (DPW) might be a resource to look into as it could relate to the program if it is adopted in the town. Councilor Feltner who was present suggested the Gideon Schreiber the Town's Senior Planner might have a list of islands in the town.

Motion: A motion was made by O'Connell that the Conservation Commission would explore all the requirements of Watertown becoming a member of Bee City USA. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that the Conservation Commission would explore all the requirements of Watertown becoming a member of Bee City USA.

Feltner made a request that Schwab contact the Department of Conservation (DCR) and Recreation and see about the Japanese Weed which is an invasive species taking over the area of the river from Watertown Square to the West. O'Connell suggested asking DCR to come and explain what resources they have available so the CC could determine how they could assist them. Schwab said she will follow up with Driscoll at the DCR to get more information. Fairbairn also suggested that Friends of Watertown Riverfront might be of assistance as well.

3. Discussion: 85 Walnut Street

Fairbairn explained that he attended a public meeting on the redevelopment project at 85 Walnut St. that proposed to be a linear structure to the north and south of Arsenal Street that includes an expansion of parking areas on a multilevel parking garage.

Fairbairn said he had concern with some major tree canopy coming down as a result of the project but was assured from the landscape architect there is a huge interest in creating a very nice vegetated area that includes an increase in open space from 22% to 30 %.

Fairbairn spoke of his concerns for the future of the cars taking up space that could be in the future for living, breathing plants and bees.

Feltner referred to the design at 85 Walnut St. as adaptable re-use and said that the garage in the overall picture was not adaptable space if it was being used for parking. O'Connell asked what adaptable parking space was and Feltner explained that adaptable parking garages have higher ceilings. She added that out west they have elevator parking available. She summarized that this development would not get Watertown within the range of their environmental goals. She thanked the Conservation Commission for watching out for this development.

Rose urged members of the CC to attend the public meetings and to speak up on their concerns because the CC had no teeth to stop developers from proceeding with their proposal as they were allowed to by the town. Feltner said she agreed and added that the developers were allowing comments and questions at the meeting the previous night.

Bering asked if the CC could make comments to the Planning Department about the project. Feltner warned it goes to the Planning Board in December.

After a brief discussion about the procedural timing of the review process, Fairbairn volunteered to write a letter on behalf of the CC making comments for the developers to

consider. Rose urged him to applaud the developer's choices that increase green space in the proposed plans, and to ask them to decrease as much as possible the amount of asphalt in the overall development.

Motion: Bering made a motion that the CC agreed for Fairbairn to write a proposed letter to the developers encouraging less asphalt that would be reviewed by members at the December meeting. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that Fairbairn would write a letter to the developers encouraging less asphalt to be reviewed by members at the commission at the December meeting.

4. Minutes- October 2, 2019

After minor modifications were requested, the minutes to the October 2, 2019 meeting were accepted by motion.

Motion: Bering made a motion to accept the minutes from the October 2, 2019 meeting. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached accepting the minutes from the October 2, 2019.

5. Review- Meeting and Filing Dates for 2020

After a review of the meeting and filing dates for the year 2020, the dates were agreed upon by members of the commission.

Motion: Bering made a motion to accept the meeting and filing dates for 2020. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached accepting the meeting and filing dates for 2020.

6. Discussion: Associate Members

Rose said she felt led to limit this discussion due to Martin's absence, and also due to the time which was already getting late.

Fairbairn referred members to his two hand-outs that were circulated regarding Associate Memberships from some of the Conservation Commissions in surrounding towns. Rose asked staff to send out Fairbairn's first email on the subject matter which contained helpful links for members who wanted to research the topic on their own.

Fairbairn said he felt the less formal approach to associate memberships might be best for their commission. He mentioned he thought it would be helpful to identify resident individuals who have helpful skill sets, who would be available to attend most meetings, and able and be ready to step in when they were needed. Rose said that what she wanted most from having associates members of the Conservation Commission was to have individuals ready to replace anyone at the point of them stepping down off the commission.

Egan asked Fairbairn to clarify if he was looking for groups or delegates to select from. Fairbairn explained they would be looking for individuals who had specific skills and credentials that could assist the function by filling in where they were needed.

Rose pointed out that candidates for associate positions on the CC would need Wetlands Protection Act education and that maybe they should be looking to other groups with similar missions. Rose emphasized she wants individuals ready to take over when someone from the CC retires or quits.

O'Connell said they should figure out what the void is in the process and why it takes so long for a new person to become a full member.

Schwab said she was interested in finding out more about the process and would get more information for them for the next meeting.

7. CPA Update

Rose informed members that the CPAC is meeting more than one time per month to get up to speed on what needs to be accomplished. The CPAC just completed interviews for the part time coordinator and selected a candidate named Lanae Handy who accepted the position. She was already in attendance at the last meeting.

Rose said that Jan Goldman of J.M. Goldson, who is the consultant for the CPAC had gone on a tour of the Town with planning staff. She also attended the formal kick off at the Commanders Mansion which was also attended by Town Councilor Lisa Feltner, Nancy Hammett and Lanae Handy

Rose explained that the first public forum for CPAC will be held on Wednesday December 4th where Rose would be on the same night as the Conservation Commission meeting. She said that a second public forum will be held on February 27th.

Rose reported that Mark Krackiewicz, a member of the CPAC had introduced the concept of educational tours of the town's resources for the new members to bring them up to speed on *Open Space and Parks and Recreation*, *Affordable Housing* and *Historic Preservation* as they relate to the CPAC program.

Rose asked members of the commission to think about whether or not they would be interested in planning mini tours of the CC's own pride and joy areas to educate members of this committee.

After a brief discussion about holding the tour in the springtime, a motion was made by members of the board to begin the planning process.

Motion: Bering made a motion that members of the Conservation Commission would target January to begin work planning a mini-tour of conservation areas to take members of the CPAC on for educational purposes. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached that in January members of the Conservation Commission would begin to work on a plan for a mini tour of conservation areas to take members of the CPAC on.

8. Agent Report

a. MVP update

Schwab reported that the Core MVP Team is meeting is next week, and that the stake holder workshop dates have been set for December. She said that the Conservation Commission chair will be invited to the December stake holder workshops

Schwab said she will update the CC on the Core MVP Team meeting and distribute relevant materials at the December meeting

She said that members are welcome to compile some recommendations and send them to her once the baseline data has been reviewed

b. GSA site

Martin, Rose, Schwab and State Representative Hecht and the DCR staff took site tours of the former GSA site after complaints were made of some litter in the area that abuts the condominiums along Coolidge Ave.

During the site visit Schwab noticed the Wetland area had grown in nicely and that the capped area is also a nice expansive lawn, although no digging can occur in that area.

Invasives were spotted along the southern edge of the site in the area that carries water to the Charles River.

The litter that had been complained about was seen mostly between two parallel fences and looked to be old. It consisted of some tires and some litter that amounts to a couple bags of trash, plus some larger items.

Schwab and members of the CC present were interested in doing a volunteer clean-up day before winter, but DCR seemed to have qualms about people going into those areas of the site so efforts have been stalled on that effort.

Egan asked the public was not admitted to go on the site. Members of the CC explained it had once been very contaminated at one point.

c. Update on outstanding Orders of Conditions

330 Pleasant: Schwab reported she had walked the site to see the landscape plan in progress with the construction manager, project landscape architect, DCR staff, and Hayward. They identified the key trees to preserve when creating 3 pathways that connect from site to DCR path.

She said that the next step is to hire an arborist who will give them a cost estimate and tag trees/brush for removal.

She reported that the DCR gave the project manager the go-ahead to do some pruning and clearing of invasives on both sides of the trail, and soon they we will see how much of the pruning they are willing to do.

She said that clearing for the paths will be balanced by a planting plan so that the area is cohesively landscaped and not overly pruned

After the Agent Reports, Rose asked Schwab if she had a chance to work on any tracking of the regulatory business that had gone before the Commission, since the meeting last month. Schwab reported that since the last month's meeting, Jenness had researched all conservation projects from the last decade that had gone before the commission.

Jenness reported that she began a spread sheet containing addresses of all project sites, their Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Watertown Wetlands Ordinance (WWO) project numbers, and other fields of general information. She explained that additional fields of information that contain more details about the scope of the projects will be added over time.

Motion: At 9:35 PM Bering made a motion to adjourn the meeting. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 PM.