Inland Wetlands/Conservation Commission

Minutes of Regular Meeting (Zoom)

March 15, 2021

Members Present: Mark Burdick, Brant Burz, Felicia Jones, Susan Kelsey, Ellery Sinclair.

Meeting was called to order at 7:03 P.M. by Chairman Burdick. Jones made motion to approve February 16, 2021 minutes as presented; seconded by Sinclair; passed unanimously.

**Public Input:** None.

**Old Business:**

**Pawezka Hemp Farm, Stein Lane:** Burdick reported that he had received an email from Pawezka’s lawyer but that it did not directly address our request for cost-sharing for soil type determination. Burdick reiterated that the primary issue regarding this activity is that the Commission is aware of a recorded subdivision map on file with the Town Clerk that indicates the area disturbed in preparation for the hemp planting is wetlands. Conversely, the USDA Soil Survey depicts the area as a non-wetland soil (Hero). Consensus of members is that this discrepancy needs to be resolved. Farming in wetlands is considered by state statute to be a permitted activity, but the Commission still needs to be apprised of the proposed activity, which did not happen in this case. Another issue to be resolved is whether a small ponded area was filled in; neighbors have informed the Commission that prior to the hemp farm, there was a significant wetland on the property containing open water; fairly current and historical aerial photos appear to show an area of open area. Filling of this wetland would not be considered a use of right under the agricultural exemption and this ultimately may be the only possible violation to be addressed. Burz asked if we have the right to request the soil be tested and suggested that we request to inspect the property during the time of high water table. Burdick wondered how we would go about determining if a wetland was filled in. He will write another letter to Pawezka’s attorney, advocating cooperation between both parties. Kelsey will research the Town ordinance that allows Town commissions to request applicants to pay for requested professional services.

**Railroad Pesticide Spraying:** Sinclair sent a message to Maria Horn regarding railroad right of way spraying in areas of wetlands and watercourses. She responded, indicating that she feels this is an important issue. She requested a copy of the Massachusetts statutes that address this issue; Sinclair will send her said statutes.

**Sustainable CT:** Jones reported that Sadeh (Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center) is working with the Recreation Commission on a project that has potential for earning certification points. There is a scheduled clean-up day of the town hall gardens with the “pollinator gardeners”. There is to be a clean-up day of the Mohawk Trail around Earth Day with the Appalachian Trail Club partnering with Habitat for Humanity; Habitat has offered accessed over their property to the Blue Trail. Jones said that agricultural projects such as sustainable farming and composting would qualify for Sustainable CT credits.

**RT 7 Fuels:** Jones reported that the soil pile remains at the gas station because it is still frozen.

**Regulations:** Kelsey suggested that we have copies made of the new regulations to be available through the town clerk, as well as having hard copies for members. Jones will research having several copies copied bound for the Commission; Sinclair requested a bound copy. Kelsey also said we need to verify that the regulations have been posted on the town’s website.

**New Business:** None

**Budget:** Kelsey will check with the treasurer to ensure that our 2021-2022 budget will remain at its current amount ($2,500).

**Routing Sheet Sign-offs:**

**1. Tim Metzger and Julia Olff, 84 Railroad Street:** 24’ x 36’ shop.

**Communications:** None.

Kelsey made motion to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.; seconded by Jones; passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Kelsey, secretary