



**TOWN OF WINCHESTER
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

Town of Winchester Town Hall 338 Main Street - 2nd Floor – P. Francis Hicks

October 14, 2021 – 5:00PM

Meeting Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Amanda Hill called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

2. ROLL CALL:

The following individuals were present: Marc Gizzie, Amanda Hill, Jen Perga, Willard Platt, Renata Waldron, and John Wiarda. Town Manager Josh Kelly and staff member Pam Colombie were also present.

3. COMMUNITY GARDEN:

A. Discuss Visits to Potential Sites/Consider Other Potential Sites:

Staff noted that while several members had recently visited three potential sites, two of those chosen may have been identified prematurely. Mr. Kelly noted that while the Town has acquired properties through blight foreclosures and tax foreclosures, he is currently reviewing each of those properties, parcel by parcel, for the highest and best possible use. He noted that he is taking a look at each property to make a determination as to whether the Town would want to retain it for some reason, would want to sell it, or would want to permanently protect it with a conservation easement. Mr. Kelly indicated that he learned that this Commission had taken a look at several properties that have already been earmarked for a sale or conveyance. He noted that he will provide a full list of town-owned properties that are available for review by this group to consider.

Mr. Kelly suggested that the Commission review the existing community garden and consider whether that one should be revitalized. Mr. Gizzie indicated that he had an opportunity to visit that one and reported that it definitely would need revitalization. He reported that it had giant planting beds and understood that someone had reached out to the Department of Public Works to do some work on that garden. Ms. Waldron opined that it would be beneficial to have a community garden closer to town for the residents who might not have access to the one on Wallens Hill.

The consensus of the commission was that interest in such an initiative should be gauged prior to the garden being built. Different options for polling were discussed including a blurb in the town's quarterly newsletter and a flyer in the food distribution boxes. Another idea was to have an informational tent or booth on Election Day just outside of the required 75-foot radius.

4. SUSTAINABLE CONNECTICUT:

A. Support Redevelopment of Brownfield Sites (Action 2.1).

A very preliminary excel file of brownfield sites in town was prepared by staff and reviewed by the commission as it related to Action 2.1 for the Sustainable CT initiative. The commission had been provided with a binder that included printouts of possible sub-action items from each action included as part of Sustainable CT.

Various properties within town were discussed and considered. Mr. Kelly reported the new owners of 10 Bridge Street were intending to bring forward a grant application to the Board of Selectmen and to seek a letter of support from them with the Town being a co-applicant. He noted the partnering allows the possibility for funds and may serve as an incentive to other properties who should be included among those identified under the broad definition of brownfields.

B. Vibrant and Creative Cultural Ecosystems (Action 4).

Mr. Platt suggested that Whiting Street might be a perfect area to be designated as an art district. Mr. Kelly suggested a walking tour of Winsted. Ms. Perga noted that Phillip Allen and Ric Nalette had done that, referring the commission to the green painted shoe marks with the words *CityWalks* in it. The addition of way

finding signs might be achieved through grant money and may satisfy the sub-action of 4.1. Ms. Perga noted that some of this work might be achieved through students' work and their capstone projects. The last local maps of Winsted were done by the Economic Development Commission in 2019.

5. CHARGING STATIONS:

A. Continued Discussion.

Mr. Wiarda reported the Stop and Shop charging stations are going to be added. It was noted that the discussion at the last meeting was to follow up with the town's Finance Department on tracking the use and hours of charging. Staff suggested that this Commission consider whether they would like to possibly forward a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission that their zoning regulations include a requirement for new developers to include infrastructure for EV charging in any type of multi-family housing proposal.

It was noted that a mention ought to be included on the town's website, social media, and newsletter about the charging stations that Winchester currently has.

Mr. Wiarda noted that Northwest CT Community Bank is also considering adding EV charging stations. He reported that the Energy Commission had identified the wastewater treatment plant as the largest energy consumer in town. Ms. Perga requested staff to obtain the report previously prepared by the Energy Commission. Mr. Wiarda estimated this was undertaken between 2002 and 2004. Mr. Gizzie discussed the possibility of the town obtaining a fuel cell, noting that there is grant money available for capturing the methane at the plant and creating electricity.

Mr. Kelly reported that the Board of Selectmen was expected to appoint Joseph Ulevicus as another new commissioner at their upcoming meeting. Additionally, Mr. Kelly noted that as several commissioners of this board, due to their affiliation with other boards, had attended a Freedom of Information (FOI) training meeting a couple of months back. As a result, Mr. Kelly indicated that he would be inclined to complete the paperwork documenting that and satisfying Action 8.1 of Sustainable CT. Efforts made with improved communication will satisfy 8.2, according to Mr. Kelly.

6. WINSTED MICROGRIDS/DIFFUSE/DISPERSED GRID:

No discussion.

7. ADJOURN:

MOTION: Ms. Waldron, Mr. Platt second, to adjourn at 6:15PM; unanimously approved.

**Respectfully submitted,
Pamela A. Colombie
Recording Clerk**