



**TOWN OF WINCHESTER
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

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

August 19, 2021 – 5:00PM

Meeting Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Jen Perga called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

2. ROLL CALL:

Ms. Perga noted that the following individuals were present: Marc Gizzie, Amanda Hill, Willard Platt, Renata Waldron, and John Wiarda. Town Manager Josh Kelly and Enforcement Officer Michael Stankov were also present.

3. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

A. Sustainable Connecticut - Presentation and Discussion led by Town Manager Josh Kelly.

Each person introduced themselves, providing information on their respective backgrounds. Ms. Perga shared a historical perspective of this Commission. She recalled former Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission Chairman Ric Nalette inventorying the town's street trees, forming a data file on where there were existing ones and identifying locations where there ought to be some. She noted that there were maps drafted by the Northwest Conservation District followed by some work undertaken with the update to the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Kelly distributed a summary sheet on Sustainable CT. He explained that this was not the only reason that the Commission was convened. Mr. Kelly shared his hope that by striving to attain some of the goals of Sustainable CT, it will also serve as a conduit of action that the Town can take to move forward. He explained that Sustainable CT was a program launched a few years ago as a partnership between Eastern Connecticut State University and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

Mr. Kelly reported that Winchester is not being charged to participate with Sustainable CT, who receives their funding from the State and private donations. He noted that there are a lot of different ideas that Sustainable CT has put together and they hope that municipalities will achieve a higher level of sustainability. He noted that a lot of the items pertain to environmental remediation and environmental preservation. However, Mr. Kelly explained, there are many components to their roadmap that do not relate to the environment such as homelessness, poverty, economic development, etc. He noted that these are concepts that Sustainable CT sees as necessary to sustainability but explained that those items can be passed off to other boards/commissions and/or staff where appropriate.

Joining Sustainable CT provides access to information and rubrics used by other towns, according to Mr. Kelly. Additional benefits to achieving a bronze or silver status of Sustainable CT includes grant opportunities for small community projects that relate to sustainability. Ms. Perga relayed how beneficial it would be to bring in a consultant to make recommendations on Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for the benefit of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission and the Highland Lake Watershed Association.

Mr. Platt questioned whether it was likely that the work undertaken as part of this might be shelved after a while. Mr. Kelly assured him that it would not, relaying the work he had undertaken in both Waterford, where he served on a board, and Bolton, where he served as the Town Administrator. Mr. Platt suggested immediate review of 3.3 from the rubric, pertaining to Watershed Management.

Ms. Perga suggested an Energy Fair, noting that she had been at one where Eversource distributed LED bulbs. Ms. Hill shared information on energy fairs that she had participated with, noting that Eversource continues to provide free home energy audits.

Mr. Kelly agreed to review the rubric to evaluate what the Town may have already accomplished within the past three years. Finally, Mr. Kelly agreed to set up municipal access for each commissioner to the Sustainable CT website.

4. CHARGING STATIONS (PRESENT, FUTURE):

A. Discussion Led by John Wiarda.

Mr. Wiarda reported that Northwest Community Savings Bank has six spots available that might be used for charging stations, explaining that he would like to see more of these in town made available for electric vehicles. He noted that the ones at Bank of America seem to be used often and hoped that more would be added to that property and to the back of Town Hall.

Mr. Wiarda noted the federal tax credits and state tax credits that are available for owners of electric vehicles. Ms. Perga reported having consulted with the superintendent of schools at Northwest Regional School District #7 about possibly adding a charging station to that campus. She noted that the superintendent shared concern with whether the four feeder towns would want to pay for that energy. Ms. Perga questioned whether there were private entities that were interested in providing the station with a portal for paying for the charge. Mr. Wiarda thought it likely, citing companies such as Chargepoint, EVGO, Electrify America, etc. It was noted that there would be an app on a person's phone to allow for payment. Ms. Perga questioned whether the Town pays for the energy for the charging stations at Bank of America. Mr. Kelly confirmed. Staff questioned whether there was data on the number of registered electrical vehicles among the residents of Winchester. Mr. Kelly confirmed that he had recently been provided with that data. Mr. Stankov reported that the State of Connecticut is seeking to have their fleet of vehicles as electric-only by 2030. Mr. Gizzie questioned whether the Town intends to continue to pay for the energy needed for charging of the vehicles. Mr. Wiarda noted that of the four charging stations in town, Hartford Healthcare covers the cost for two and the Town of Winchester covers the cost for the other two. Mr. Kelly explained that it was an incentive to transfer residents to the electrical vehicle movement. Mr. Wiarda noted that benefit will eventually phase out. Mr. Kelly noted that the Town may not always own that Bank of America building, too.

Mr. Kelly exited the meeting at 5:51PM.

5. OTHER IDEAS, INITIATIVES:

Ms. Hill suggested a community garden for the town. She also suggested an extension of the walking trail. Mr. Stankov suggested reviewing roof tops of the downtown buildings for solar panels. Noting his work background, Mr. Gizzie explained what California does with fuel cells, taking the methane from the wastewater treatment process and described the chemical process that is undertaken. Mr. Gizzie suggested broader communication on the town's charging stations offered at Bank of America.

6. SET REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE:

Ms. Hill agreed to chair the Conservation Commission after a couple more meetings with Ms. Perga. Dates were reviewed and a regular meeting schedule was established for the following: September 9, 2021, October 14, 2021, November 4, 2021, December 9, 2021, January 13, 2022, February 10, 2022, March 10, 2022, April 14, 2022, May 12, 2022, June 9, 2022, July 14, 2022, and August 11, 2022.

7. ADJOURN:

MOTION: Ms. Hill, Ms. Waldron second, to adjourn at 6:25PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Pamela A. Colombie
Recording Clerk