

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 13, 2019, 7:30 P.M.
MEETING ROOM B MADISON TOWN CAMPUS**

Subject to approval: Minutes of the Meeting of May 13, 2019 - 7:30 p.m. - Meeting Room B - Madison Town Campus

Members present: Chairman Francis Brady, Vice Chairman Christine Bouchard, Secretary Alex Cushing, and Commissioners Heather Crawford and Scott Sandora.

Members absent: Rachel Klein and Richard Gedney.

Others present: Daniel Hand High School Teacher Elisa Brako.

1. **Call meeting to order:** Chairman Francis Brady called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
2. **Review and approve minutes for April 8, 2019 meeting as submitted.**

Commissioner Heather Crawford made the motion to accept the April 8, 2019 minutes as submitted; it was seconded by Vice Chairman Christine Bouchard and unanimously approved.

Vote to accept the April 8, 2019 minutes as submitted, passed, 5-0-0.

IN FAVOR: Chairman Brady, Vice Chairman Bouchard, Secretary Alex Cushing, and Commissioners Crawford and Scott Sandora.

OPPOSED: None.

ABSTAINED: None.

3. **Call for additional agenda items:** Commissioners wanted to add the Planning and Zoning Commission's coastal resiliency presentation summary; discussion about Daniel Hand High School Teacher Elisa Brako's Ecology Club and its willingness to assist the Conservation Commission; Fence Creek development, which is headed for the Planning and Zoning Commission; and a Zoning Board of Appeals application, with property which is on Long Island Sound.

4. **Natural Resources Inventory (NRI):**

~ **Discuss next steps in validating current data collection process to ensure usefulness in town mapping systems:** Chairman Brady gave a summary of a field walk a couple of weeks ago at Rockland, where many vernal pools were seen, along with wildflowers and other species; the Madison Land Trust was also walking the site. In terms of what to do with the raw data collected during that walk, it was suggested the Conservation Commission speak to Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson about having the data incorporated by the GIS coordinator who has been secured by the town to upload the information. Discussion also centered on whether to open up the data collection efforts to the public, so more information may be added. Commissioner Crawford stated that the data could be color coded on the website, and she cautioned against publicly photographing and identifying the location of plants, especially endangered species, adding that the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) will not release information on such species, unless a danger is present, such as potential development. In those cases, the DEEP will step forward and send written comments to protect the species, according to Commissioner Crawford, who stated that she will try to meet with the state person in charge of DEEP's Natural Diversity Database to discuss endangered species. Commission Secretary Cushing stated that adding a contour map to the database would allow

participants to walk through sites with the photographs. Commissioners offered possible names for the website, beyond Natural Resources Inventory, such as Natural Resource Inventory Database, Madison's Outdoor Survey, or The Great Nature Survey. Commissioner Sandora stated that the commission should decide who would have access to the database and who would add the projects to be recorded. Chairman Brady stated that, especially in the beginning, the Conservation Commission needs to train and monitor participants. In addition, a regular review of the data will be required, to ensure it is being input correctly, according to Chairman Brady. Commissioners will also have to discover strategies that work and continue to develop them, according to Vice Chairman Bouchard. Chairman Brady, Vice Chairman Bouchard and Commissioner Crawford stated they would like to meet with the town's GIS representative to discuss the database and its process; they are hoping to get together on a Thursday afternoon, if possible. Daniel Hand High School Teacher Elisa Brako received a brief summary about how the program application works from Vice Chairman Bouchard, and discussion centered on the Ecology Club's role in the program; she stated she has several students who are interested in participating in the summer internship and others would like to keep the database project going through the fall.

~ **Consider the creation of one or a few large open NRI projects in Epicollect5. Final decision to be taken after Commissioner Bouchard attends training workshop.** Vice Chairman Bouchard stated that her training workshop will be taking place in June.

5. **Project/Issue Updates:**

~ **Sustainable CT Silver Goal for Madison—Commission to vote on the top three to four focus activities (Master Action List was circulated previously) to support progress to obtaining Silver this year from the following list:** 2.1.1, Watershed Education, 5 pts.; 2.10 a, Invasive Species—Municipal staff focus 10 pts.+; 2.10 b, Invasive Species—Removal projects on Town Properties, 5 pts.; 2.10 c, Invasive Species—Residential Education 5 pts.; 2.11.4, Green Grounds—Native Planting & Pruning policy, 5 pts.; 7.1, Sustainability Events, stand alone or in existing town event 10 / 5 pts.; 7.3, On-Going Training of Commissioners, 5 pts.; 10.1, Innovation Actions—e.g. Single Use Plastic Education, 5 to 20 pts. Chairman Brady stated that these are the projects for the Sustainable Connecticut Silver Award that are clearly Conservation Commission related. These items must be completed by the state's August submission date; they cannot just be in progress, according to Vice Chairman Bouchard, who asked that the commission go through the list sequentially. For Watershed Education, Vice Chairman Bouchard stated that this project cannot be completed by the end of July. If Watershed Education includes signage, Commissioner Crawford stated that it could be completed within a month, with signs such as, *You are now in the Neck River Watershed*. The Madison Land Trust might like to see the signs, Vice Chairman Bouchard stated. Madison's third grade elementary school children's annual field trips to Rockland and West Wharf are focused on Watershed Education, and those field trips must meet state of Connecticut science standards, Commissioner Crawford stated. Invasive Species requires much work, from the municipal staff focus, to removal projects on town properties, and to residential education. Chairman Brady stated that the Conservation Commission's website educates about invasive species, with links to state agencies and nonprofit organizations, such as the Connecticut Audubon Society. In addition, the Conservation Commission educates about invasive species in Farmers Markets and through the Bauer Park Festival. The town has removed invasive species from Tuxis Pond, Vice Chairman Bouchard stated. For Green Grounds, there is an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) grounds management plan that has already been written, Commissioner Crawford stated. Implementing the Green Groups is a town responsibility, according to Commissioner Crawford and Vice Chairman Bouchard. Mostly the town has contractors who come in to prune, Commissioner Crawford said. However, the town should be asked if it has this policy, Vice Chairman Bouchard said. There is a "Hold a Sustainability Event Template" that would answer many questions about stand-alone or existing sustainability town events, according to Commissioner Crawford. The Planning and Zoning Commission's recent presentation by the University of Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate

Adaptation (CIRCA) is a sustainability event, as well as anything that is being done at the Farmers Markets, and articles that are published, stated Vice Chairman Bouchard. Commissioner Sandora offered Daniel Hand High School's Unity Week as a sustainability event. On-going training of commissioners takes place through a variety of workshops and conventions for statewide land use agencies and commissions, according to Vice Chairman Bouchard. In terms of Innovation Actions, Chairman Brady stated that the Bring Your Own Bag effort fits in this category, along with other single use plastic education and initiatives. Education programs on dark skies should be included in the Silver Award effort, as well, according to Commissioner Crawford. Chairman Brady asked commissioners to send him their lists of priorities in completing the projects.

~ **Daniel Hand HS feedback on future engagement with our Commission.** Daniel Hand High School Biology Teacher Elisa Brako stated that the Ecology Club students are very concerned about single use plastic awareness, and the club is very good at raising public awareness through creativity, such as making slogans. In addition, the students pick up trash at the Bauer Park Festival. In terms of working as interns for the Conservation Commission, Chairman Brady asked whether the students are interested in receiving money, but Ms. Brako stated that she did not think so. There is money in the budget for interns, and were they to be paid, it would amount to somewhere in the range of \$10 per hour, according to Chairman Brady. Though four students could not be funded, the commission would be pleased to have as many student volunteers as possible, according to Chairman Brady. One of the Ecology Club students is a senior and the others are sophomores, Ms. Brako stated. Technology skills would also be needed, Commissioner Crawford stated. Students should also be willing to get dirty, especially when completing outdoor projects, according to Vice Chairman Bouchard. One of the Conservation Commissioners would be the supervisor, to whom the students would report, according to Chairman Brady. Students who volunteer could use the hours for their high school community service volunteer work, Vice Chairman Bouchard stated. An unpaid internship would also look good on the students' resumes, she stated. Discussion centered on whether the internship program should be a paid position, whether it should be given hourly or as a stipend, or whether the budgeted money should be used for materials and supplies, such as tools for outdoor work. Chairman Brady asked the commissioners to send him feedback with their ideas about the budget funds. Commissioner Sandora stated that if there is going to be outdoor work, students should sign a waiver; Chairman Brady stated he will check with Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson about whether the waivers are needed.

~ **Madison Farmers' Market—feedback on first event. Next event scheduled for June 7, 2019.** Education on invasive species was provided by the Conservation Commission at the Farmers Market, and 11 people stopped by; plans are to be involved in the next Farmers Market, perhaps to have dark skies education, according to Chairman Brady.

6. **Other matters:** The coastal resiliency presentation will be discussed at the next meeting. Commissioner Crawford stated that a Fence Creek development of nine units on a 2.5-acre site is going before the Planning and Zoning Commission on Thursday, and the Zoning Board of Appeals has an application where impervious surface will be increased. Planning and Zoning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals applications have not been forwarded to the Conservation Commission and Chairman Brady will follow up with Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson about this.

7. **Adjournment**

Vice Chairman Bouchard made the motion to adjourn at 9:05 p.m.; it was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and unanimously approved.

Vote to adjourn at 9:05 p.m. passed, 5-0-0.

IN FAVOR: Chairman Brady, Vice Chairman Bouchard, Secretary Cushing, and Commissioners Crawford and Sandora.

OPPOSED: None.

ABSTAINED: None.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlene H. Kennedy, clerk