

Minutes
Watertown Conservation Commission
Lower Hearing Room
Wednesday, May 1, 2013
7:30p.m.
Adopted July 17, 2013

Conservation Commission Members Present: Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Charles Bering, Michelle Gauvin, Patrick Fairbairn, Maria Rose

Conservation Commission Member Absent: Lou Taverna, Leo Martin

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Steve Magoon

Members of the Public Present: See Sign-In Form

Pallotta-McDermott chaired.

1. Whitney Hill Maintenance and Educational Activities Plan - Discussion

Pallotta-McDermott noted that this agenda item was an opportunity to listen to the community regarding their concerns about Whitney Hill. For the record, Pallotta-McDermott read Watertown Town Council's Resolution R-2013-3 – *A Resolution Preserving the Property Known as Whitney Hill Park*.

Fairbairn coordinated the listening session gathering input on how the CC would manage Whitney Hill.

Linda Cocca, 84 Marion Road, supported that the area remain overgrown. She is an employee of the Audubon Society and has seen 75 species of birds in the area. She noted that the overgrown nature of the area discouraged kids from hanging out and starting fires. The overgrown conditions and dead remaining trees make excellent habitats. She supported leaving the conditions as they are.

Jessica Pederson, 40 Oliver Street, Director of Operations at the Esplanade, was interested in seeing a Maintenance Plan for the area. She inquired if additional paths were proposed.

Marilynne Roach, 141 Marshall Street, supported minimal changes to the area. She'd like the area preserved in its natural state. She suggested the natural history of the area should be a priority focus.

Janet VanNess, 115 Worcester Street, described the area as a forest/meadow area. She noted that teens still hang and party in the area, in particular where there is discarded granite. She identified broken glass as well. She expressed concern that the area is not picked up and that it is a fire

hazard. Pallotta McDermott suggested that she contact the City regarding her observable concerns. VanNess would like to see the granite and glass removed.

Andreas Aeppli, 52 Oliver Street, was concerned about the long term parking in the winter.

Councilor Susan Falkoff, 19 Oliver Street, reported that coyotes and foxes live in the area.

Councilor Vincent Piccirilli, informed that the granite was dumped by the DPW when it maintained the area. He also noted that abutters have dumped trees and brush over their fences. He informed that the Town Council envisions the area styled like an Audubon Park. He did not see additional paths to be opened but that the current ones are maintained.

Pallotta McDermott inquired about the guarantees that the area will not be built on. Piccirilli responded that the requirements of a 2/3 vote of Town Council, State House and Senate to allow for such an occurrence made it very difficult. In addition to the high legal and political thresholds, he noted that the property is steep and impractical for building as well. Pallotta McDermott added that if the property was under a Conservation Restriction, in the care and custody of the CC, it would provide additional protection from possible development.

Piccirelli noted that the CCs Maintenance Plan for the property will assist the Town Manager in preparing a budget for the area.

Magoon supported leaving the area alone. He suggested that the implication of maintenance activities be studied.

Cocca reported that for a fee the Audubon Society can provide plant identification services.

Fairbairn noted that there are other groups that offer similar services in support of natural area management and “citizen science” projects for community adoption. He encouraged the public to contact the CC office if they had any additional concerns or wanted more information.

Pederson agreed the “citizen science” activities would be attractive to volunteers.

Rose sought feedback about etched boulders or granite markers identifying the large trees. VanNess noted that the more interesting natural features were off the paths and did not support new paths being created.

2. Dialogue with Steve Magoon, Director of Planning and Community Development. Re: CPA & Zoning

Magoon noted that CPA is a source for funding affordable housing, open space and historic preservation activities. Currently, the State will guarantee a 25% match for CPA funding.

Falkoff stated that there was an organized opposition effort to CPA in 2005 which defeated its adoption. She inquired why this item was being discussed. Fairbairn responded that the CC was interested in finding sources to fund Open Space. Magoon noted that the Town is attuned to the

community's concerns and saw opportunities. He noted that although the Town is highly developed, there have been recent redevelopment activities.

Fairbairn inquired if the Town had ever considered the conversion of small properties for open space, such as community gardens. Magoon noted that properties have been purchased for community housing.

Rose saw opportunities along Pleasant Street if CPA monies were available.

Private property owners would need to participate, Magoon has not seen properties coming up for sale for open space. Significant public funds would need to be available to compete with private market resources.

Piccirelli informed that there are many Town owned parcels with parkland status, such as the School Street Delta.

Fairbairn suggested that the CC issue to Town Council its position on CPA. Bering opposed making such a statement; he preferred that the CC identified needed programs and properties.

Falkoff suggested that the item be tabled until the new Recycling Center is fully opened and Filippello Park is completed.

3. Minutes of the April 2013 Meetings – Approved.

4. Old Business

Item	Update status
Whitney Hill Report	In preparation of the CC's charge of the annual maintenance report and public education of the land due in December a community meeting will be scheduled to gather community input for use of the area.
Recycling Center/Filippello Park	Cost estimates are being developed between CDM and Wacker for Filippello Park. Input on uses to be forwarded to Recreation Dept.
Storm Water Advisory Commission	The Post Construction Storm Water Run-Off Ordinance is near completion. Ordinances to be managed by DPW.
GSA	CC submitted a comment response letter April 5, 2013.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.