

**TOWN OF NEW CANAAN, CONNECTICUT  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
MAY 10, 2018**

**Town Hall, Board Room – 6:30 p.m.**

**REGULAR MEMBERS PRESENT:**

**REGULAR MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**Mr. Hutchins, Chairman  
Ms. Sweitzer, Secretary  
Ms. Andros**

**Ms. Lauver  
Mr. Schipper**

Also in Attendance:  
Sven Englund, Town Council

**MEETING**

**HOUSEKEEPING:**

1. The Meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. by Chairman Hutchins.

2. Approve Minutes of April 12, 2018 meeting.

Motion was made by Ms. Sweitzer and seconded by Chairman Hutchins to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2018 meeting. Ms. Andros said she would have to abstain from voting as she was not at the meeting. Chairman Hutchins said they will have to table the minutes until they have a quorum.

**NEXT STEPS:**

3. Open Space Report – action implications.

- a. Sharing with Town Planner, P&Z, and Inland Wetlands
- b. Groundwork for funding the established Land Acquisition Fund
- c. Ranked Open Space Opportunities
  - i. Hirsch Estate (discuss with Wilton)

Chairman Hutchins said they will pass the discussion on Open Space until Mr. Schipper is present. The Executive Summary and the two maps are now on the Conservation web page.

**OPPORTUNITIES:**

4. Town-wide Conservation Commission Survey.

- a. Review prior findings
- b. Discuss 2018 or 2019 survey

Chairman Hutchins said the last time they did a survey was in 2013. At that time 5% of the households in New Canaan participated, which was considered a very high number. It focused on what people are doing to stay green, such as getting an energy audit or recycling or solar. They distributed and posted the survey online from May through September.

Ms. Sweitzer said she thinks it would be a good time to reintroduce the survey given the various public interests surrounding the site acquisition issues and the fact that the Land Acquisition Fund did not get funded for open space as it would be interesting to see what people thought about that. Chairman Hutchins said there wasn't a Land Acquisition Fund at the time, and in the meantime issues have arisen regarding the Indian Waters property, the Fowler property and the Grupe House. The Town had to scramble around and make a special appropriation in one case. Ms. Sweitzer said she thinks it would be a very important thing to know if the citizens of New Canaan are actually interested in putting money in the Land Acquisition Fund. Chairman Hutchins said one thing we did find out is that not only are people interested in conservation in terms of the environment, but also in terms of saving money. For instance if they knew it cost X dollars to put in solar and it

saved them three times X, they were all for it, or that an energy audit only costs \$100 and it could identify ways for them to save money. People are interested in quantifying what their savings would be.

Ms. Andros said they may not want to ask all the same questions, just the ones that are relevant and that we want to track. Chairman Hutchins said according to the last survey, it was designed to learn what New Canaanites think and do every day about our environment and focused on ten noteworthy findings, which he noted for the record. He thought the answers to the question asking if they would support New Canaan efforts to prohibit the use of plastic or non-recyclable bags were interesting. 70% claimed they already use recyclable shopping bags, 61% would like to see the use of plastic bags prohibited like Westport's ordinance, 27% said they would not be supportive.

Ms. Sweitzer said we should review those questions and see how we want to reframe them or add to them. We can leave out the single stream question since that no longer applies. Chairman Hutchins said the world has changed since the last survey in terms of the town having the acquisition fund but no funds in it and situations have come up. Ms. Sweitzer said she would like the survey to extend into October or November because they want to get the fall season. The games in New Canaan are pretty much winding down now and will start up again in September, which is a good time to circulate the survey.

5. Support for recommending the Town use allocated vehicle funds for Electric Vehicles (EVs) to reduce operating costs for non-emergency vehicles.

Ms. Andros said Chris Hering of the Parks and Recreation Commission contacted her to get support from the Conservation Commission for recommending that the town use allocated vehicle funds for Electric Vehicles (EVs) whenever possible for non-emergency vehicles to reduce operating costs. They had hoped it would be on the Commission's April 12<sup>th</sup> agenda because it was in the budget that they were going to buy some vehicles, but it didn't make their agenda and in the meantime the budget passed without that recommendation. So now they would like the Commission to put its stamp of approval on future purchases that as a sustainability practice the town buy electric vehicles for nonemergency use.

Mr. Englund noted that the Board of Education buys four or five Tahoes or Explorers every year to do Special Ed transport. He suggested that on the Tuesday after Labor Day as the departments start getting into their capital appropriations somebody should go out and talk to the boards and let them know that the Conservation Commission is urging that the Town of New Canaan look at electric vehicles when acquiring new vehicles for nonemergency use in every case possible.

Chairman Hutchins said so we can say the Conservation Commission joins the Parks and Recreation Commission and other commissions that have weighed in on this that it is a good idea and we recommend that the Town move in the direction of electric vehicles for nonemergency vehicles where applicable. Ms. Sweitzer said she thinks it should be one of the criteria of bidding, that preference be given to those bidders who can provide that option.

6. Grupe-Nichols-Browne House, 1124 Valley Road – status and negotiation update.

Chairman Hutchins said all he knows is what he reads in the paper that the town may use eminent domain to acquire the house and preserve the land as open space. Ms. Sweitzer said the First Taking District said they are not going to tear the house down, so what are they going to do, just let it deteriorate and fall down? You don't have to demolish the house to let the house be demolished. Chairman Hutchins said he doesn't know if that changes the Town's position about pursuing eminent domain. If he were the Town he would continue to pursue eminent domain. Just because they are not going to demolish it doesn't change the town's need for open space. He will talk to John Engel and Kevin Moynihan to see where they are going next.

7. Other Business.

None.

8. Adjourn.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, upon motion by Ms. Andros and second of Ms. Sweitzer, the Commission unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:15 p.m.

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Attest: Susan Sweitzer, Secretary