

# CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Date: Thursday, October 7, 2021

Time: 7:00pm

Place: This meeting was held as a virtual meeting via Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81477829237>

**With a quorum present**, the meeting opened at 7:02pm with Dan Green presiding as Chair.

**Members Present:** Dan Green, Susan Lunin, Jeff Zabel, Judy Hepburn, Leigh Gilligan, and Ellen Katz.

**Members Absent:** Kathy Cade

**Staff Present:** Jennifer Steel

**Members of the Public:** not recorded due to remote nature of the meeting

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**WELCOME Sonya McKnight.** Sonya was just appointed as an alternate member of the Commission. She has been a teacher, mentor, and active volunteer; she will bring her knowledge of biology, chemistry, environmental science, and City organizations to the Commission.

## DECISIONS

**I. WETLANDS DECISIONS** – None at this time

### II. CONSERVATION AREA DECISIONS

**1. (7:00) Flowed Meadow – Boulton Yanhs’ Eagle Scout boardwalk project -- \$350 funding request**

- Request: Will the Commission support up to \$350 to pay vendor invoices for the project?
- Presentation and Discussion
  - Boulton reviewed his proposed project with a PowerPoint presentation.
  - He will be constructing 115 feet of boardwalks on October 30th. He raised sufficient funds to build the sections of boardwalk. At the Commission’s suggestion, will also be placing gravel under the PVC “feet” of the sections of boardwalk. He needs and additional \$350 to cover the increased costs of materials and transportation.
  - The Commission agreed that this project will result in a big improvement to Flowed Meadows and thanked Boulton for the quality of his planning and fund-raising to date.
  - The Commission can pay approved vendor invoices and will happily do so.
- Vote: to approve the payment of a vendor invoice up to \$350. [Motion: Susan Lunin; Second: Jeff Zabel; Roll-call vote: Lunin (aye), Gilligan (aye), Zabel (aye), Hepburn (aye), Green (aye), Katz (aye); Vote: 6:0:0]

### III. ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS

**2. (7:15) Minutes of 9/23/21 to be approved**

- Documents Presented: Draft 9/23/21 minutes as edited for clarity by Ellen Katz.
- Vote to approve the 9/23/21 minutes as edited. [Motion: Susan Lunin; Second: Leigh Gilligan; Roll-call vote: Lunin (aye), Gilligan (aye), Zabel (aye), Hepburn (aye), Green (aye), Katz (abstain); Vote: 5:0:1]

**3. (7:20) Visioning/Brainstorming – Considering Ways to Improve the Conservation Commission**

- Free ranging discussion (*in italics*) occurred on the following topics
  - Roles
    - Would anyone like to do more or different things? – *not at this point in time*
    - Should we create or foster new roles? – *not at this point in time*
    - Would anyone like to try a stint as Chair? – *Dan is happy with his role, no one else is interested at this point in time*
    - Would anyone else like to be liaison to CPC? – *Susan is happy with her role, no one else is interested at this point in time*
    - Would anyone else like to be liaison to Ag Commission at some point? – *Jeff is happy with his role, no one else is interested at this point in time*
    - Would anyone else like to be liaison to Newton Commonwealth Golf at some point? – *Dan is happy with his role, no one else is interested at this point in time*
  - Process



**Mayor**

Ruthanne Fuller

**Director  
Planning &  
Development**

Barney Heath

**Chief  
Environmental  
Planner**

Jennifer Steel

**Conservation  
Commission  
Members**

Kathy Cade  
Dan Green  
Judy Hepburn  
Ellen Katz  
Susan Lunin  
Jeff Zabel  
Leigh Gilligan

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- Suggestions for improvements to the detailed agendas? – *not at this point in time*
- Suggestions for improvements to the packets? – *not at this point in time*
- Suggestions for improvements to our Zoom meetings – *not at this point in time*
- Are there any other ways for us, as a Commission, to be more effective?
  - *Staff should not accept last-minute submissions, since they tend to result in unfocused discussion and/or “working sessions”.*
  - *Staff should try to have the draft conditions included in the packets so that Commissioners can provide feedback early and so that less time will be spent “wordsmithing” at the meeting.*
  - *Commissioners should provide specific plant recommendations so that meeting time is not spent creating or modifying planting plans.*
- How could we make the Volunteer Stewards program more engaging and self-sustaining?
  - *There should be clear identification of and more support for volunteer stewards -- hats, shirts, and/or badges (consider using Newton North High School’s graphics department for design assistance) would give them more visibility and authority.*
  - *There should be more concrete recognition of/appreciation for volunteerism with, e.g., the Conservators’ awards, entries in the Mayor’s newsletter, articles, in the TAB, etc..*
- Goals
  - What land management goals do you have/should we have? (e.g., trails, ecological health, scouts, etc.)
    - Mapping “unofficial”/“buried” stormwater infrastructure to better understand hydrology and flooding. This historical map <https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/46926/637423500553570000> was noted as a good place to begin identifying priority areas for investigation. Examples of priority areas include: the South Meadow Brook subwatershed, which drains the area of Newton South High School. Having data could help the Commission address claims that development is causing more flooding in the City and identify root causes of (and solutions to) flooding. Jennifer will speak with Ted Jerdee and Mike Ovaska about this.
  - Would you like to be more involved with “advocacy” or “issues around town”? If so, what goals should we have? (e.g., climate action, trails, stormwater, flooding, schools, etc.)? – *this was not discussed*
  - Would you like to spend more time on land management? – *this was not discussed*

**IV. ISSUES AROUND TOWN DECISIONS – None at this time.**

**UPDATES**

**V. WETLANDS UPDATES**

- Stearns Brook (Oakdale Woods CA) stream cleaning to begin soon under DPW’s generic OOC.
- 33 Greenwood Street will be regrading to bring site into compliance.
- 11 David Road will be regrading to bring site into compliance.

**VI. CONSERVATION AREA UPDATES**

- Webster Conservation Area uses now all being cataloged with applications and permits.
- Webster graffiti all addressed by Richard Primack.
- UFGW/Riverwalk Stairs being engineered by City staff.
- Conversation about coordinating maintenance with PRC is underway
- ARPA fund requests have been submitted (Riverwalk trail surface, Norumbega trail surface, Kessler trail, Kennard boardwalk rehab)

**VII. ISSUES AROUND TOWN UPDATES**

- OSRP Trails Subcommittee will launch soon.

**VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES**

**OTHER TOPICS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR 48 HOURS BEFORE THE MEETING**

**ADJOURN** Vote: to adjourn at 8:01. [Motion: Susan Lunin; Second: Judy Hepburn; Roll-call vote: Lunin (aye), Gilligan (aye), Zabel (aye), Hepburn (aye), Green (aye), Katz (aye); Vote: 6:0:0]