



Town of Sherman
Conservation Commission
Monthly Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 9, 2022
Mallory Town Hall (via ZOOM), 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: B. McCann (Chair), C. Shulman, M. MacKinnon, R. Martin

Members Absent: (none)

Also Present: A. Ziffer (Guest), C. Aruza (Clerk)

Call to Order: Chairman B. McCann called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

B. McCann made a motion to vote on approval of the January 12, 2022 minutes.

Seconded by: R. Martin

Vote: Unanimous For

Correspondence: None

New Business:

Budget Update

B. McCann provided an update on the budget. There is \$1364.72 left in the commission's budget after receipt of the invoice from Jeff Main. Therefore, there is not a need to increase the budget.

P&Z Request to Provide Chapter for New PCOD

Discussion ensued on the request made by Sherman's Planning and Zoning Commission for the Conservation Commission to update the Open Space Plan chapter of the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (PCOD). The Sherman Land Acquisition Fund (SLAF) Advisory Board led the original writing of this chapter in the PCOD. The last update to the Open

Space Plan occurred in 2013. A statutory update is required soon. According to B. McCann the SLAF Advisory Board has been inactive for approximately three to four years due to lack of interest/funding.

Inquiry if J. Burrano (Vice Chair) of the Planning and Zoning Commission sought a Conservation Commission specific update with conservation goals, guidelines and concerns. The commission does not have authority to purchase land. C. Shulman advised this would now likely require a conversation with the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (NCLC). C. Shulman would like the SLAF fund to be re-instituted even if a small amount. M. MacKinnon advised 25% of Sherman's current population is aged 65 and over, and therefore the SLAF Advisory Board may find significant land acquisition opportunities in the coming years. R. Martin wants to do what is best for the town of Sherman in terms of conservation guidelines in this chapter with C. Shulman recommending a section on climate change. B. McCann will get back to everyone with more info after speaking to J. Burrano. The Open Space Plan chapter is not due until next year.

Projects/Programs for 2022

M. MacKinnon kicked off the discussion about proposed 2022 programs. One option is to invite professor and author Doug Tallamy to speak. D. Tallamy is an internationally recognized speaker who advocates for the restoration of native habitats, particularly in the backyard, as a part of conservation efforts. He is the author of several books including, "*Bringing Nature Home*", "*Nature's Best Hope*" and "*The Nature of Oaks*". The latter book discusses the importance of oaks to insects/pollinators.

He is not available until the Fall or next year. It would be optimal to have his program in conjunction with Earth Day next year if possible. He is extremely engaging and has wonderful pictures of insects in his works.

C. Shulman raised the importance of inviting new people in town to the program. Inviting newcomers will help educate more townspeople about the importance of establishing new gardens on their property to help create pollinators/native plant gardens. R. Martin suggested making contact with realtors to assist with the invitations. M. MacKinnon suggested creation of a brochure for realtors to give new clients or which could be placed at the library and IGA in town.

M. MacKinnon heard back from the other speaker she recommended – Kim Smith. Kim Smith is the director of the awarded documentary film, "*Beauty on the Wing: Life Story of the Monarch Butterfly*". She can do a live Q&A session after the screening of her documentary. She is available Earth Day weekend this year. As another option, M. MacKinnon suggested making a small donation to the CT Pollinator Pathways group and inviting them to speak. Another option would entail inviting Holly Kocet (Newtown Conservation Commission) to speak. H. Kocet has been instrumental at the state level in helping the passage of pollinator-friendly initiatives. Lastly, the commission could conduct a panel discussion centered on conservation topics with representatives from other town committees as well.

B. McCann advised that the commission needs to reach out to the library to ascertain their schedule/availability/budget. M. MacKinnon will reach out to J. Cantoni. Recommendation made to plan for K. Smith for the Spring program and D. Tallamy for the fall solstice planting timeframe which is also around the time of Farm Day. M. Mackinnon will take the lead on securing these speakers and/or alternates.

Native Species Ordinance in Newtown

R. Martin kicked off the discussion with an introduction of Amy Ziffer, a Sherman resident and landscape designer, who has considered native plant ordinances for several years. A. Ziffer shared Newtown's draft municipal ordinance. R. Martin wants to encourage passage of a similar municipal ordinance. Newtown eventually folded the guidelines into its town policy. R. Martin suggested the commission work with the Sherman Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission and the Board of Selectman as a team approach to conceptualize the right municipal standard with percentages appropriate for Sherman. The municipal ordinance could also serve as a model for private landowners to follow should they wish.

Discussion followed concerning incentivizing private landowners and commercial developers to use native plants or create buffer gardens which are 100% native. To that end, R. Martin suggested a contest whereby Sherman residents could take photos of endangered/threatened/regulated species and species of concern and send them to the commission and CT DEEP. The commission could then offer a \$50/\$100 award to the Sherman resident with the "Best Photo of the Year" entry. Or the commission could conduct annual conservation/conservationist awards with similar prize amounts for residents who introduce native plants or remove invasive plants on their property. The awards could be covered in local and neighboring town papers with a call to action to contact the commission for advice on what to plant/remove.

In addition, the commission has an upcoming requirement to do a natural resources inventory report concerning the removal of invasive plants. The commission could also advise residents that their photos could be included in the town report which is included on the town web site and in the library. It was also noted that CT DEEP will pay private homeowners for land easements to protect land from development to preserve rare species. There is a provision in CT state law for these payments.

Other recommendations were discussed. B. McCann suggested putting together a booklet of photos of the pollinator gardens around town. A. Ziffer suggested partnering with the Northwest Conservation District (NWCD) or a similar agency to enact an exchange program. Essentially residents could remove non-native/invasive species from their property and exchange them for a comparable replacement native species. There would need to be verification with the trade-in

program. Volunteers could deliver the replacement plants. The NWCD offers reduced prices which could offset costs.

The next step is to approach the town to get buy-in for a municipal ordinance. R. Martin to obtain a copy of what did pass in Newtown along with the news article concerning it within the next week. The commission will need craft its own recommendations with corroborating research to support town-specific percentages and lists of authorized native plant (trees, shrubs, grasses).

Bee Cities

D. Lowe forwarded a news article on New Milford becoming a ‘Bee City’ for the commission to consider. R. Martin is in favor of Sherman being a ‘Bee City’, which in essence means the town does everything practical to help bee populations. There are a number of activities which towns designated as bee cities must follow. One effort involves ‘No Mow May’, which requests town public works departments cease mowing during May to improve bee population growth.

M. MacKinnon cautioned that someone will need to be in charge to see the effort through as the town will undergo a formal process with certifications that it must pass to receive the designation. Bee City is an initiative that grew out of the Xerces Society. The Xerces Society focuses on invertebrate conservation and one of the co-founders was a Sherman conservationist. At present, there are no Bee Cities in CT. New Milford is on path to become the first. It may be prudent to follow their efforts. B. McCann will follow-up to find the correct contact in New Milford to check with periodically. B. McCann will also circle back to D. Lowe concerning the commission’s recommendation to learn from New Milford’s efforts. M. MacKinnon made the final suggestion to perhaps work with the Town of New Milford on the proposed fall program with D. Tallamy. Could charge a nominal attendance fee (\$5) and split the proceeds so each town could further fund pollinator gardens/Bee City initiatives. Supports continuous corridor efforts.

Old Business:

WCCAA/Cricket Valley Update

The air quality monitor has been repaired and returned. D. Lowe advised B. McCann it will be re-installed. B. McCann to verify.

R. Martin made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by: M. MacKinnon

Vote: Unanimous For

Adjournment: B. McCann adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 9, 2022, Mallory Town Hall (via ZOOM) @ 7:00 p.m.