



TOWN OF KENT

Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 19, 2023 @ 7:00pm

In attendance:
Liddy Baker
Mike Benjamin
Melissa Cherniske
Carol Franken
Connie Manes
Wendy Murphy
Jos Spelbos
First Selectman Jean Speck

Members of the Public Attending:
Jennifer Heaton-Jones, HRRA
Lynn Harrington

Call to order

1. A quorum being present, Commission Chair Connie Manes called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.
2. Accept/Amend Agenda. The Commissioners agreed to revise the order of agenda item 6, discussing PAYT/Organics Recycling first (6E) within that section thereby moving items 6A-6D down by one. *Upon a motion by Melissa Cherniske seconded by Liddy Baker, the Commissioners voted unanimously to accept the agenda as amended.*
3. Accept/amend minutes of Regular Meeting March 8, 2023. *Upon a motion by Melissa seconded by Mike Benjamin, the minutes of the March 8, 2023 Regular Meeting were unanimously approved.*
4. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Liddy Baker distributed and reviewed her written report. There remains \$2,225.87 within our 22-23 budget. A few reimbursement requests are anticipated for the Commission's April activities.
5. Public Comment. No comments.
6. Old Business.
Discussion items
 - E. Sustainable Materials Management in Kent – PAYT and Organics Recycling.
Jennifer Heaton-Jones, Executive Director of the Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority, presented the following: In recognition that Connecticut is in a waste crisis, the State has allocated funding for pilot projects intended to reduce non-recycled household waste. \$55,400 has been awarded for a "Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)" program at the Town of Kent's Transfer Station. Details are still being planned; Jen will be providing a public information session in the coming weeks. The goal is to implement the program by July 1st.

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Through the program, organic waste (food waste) will be collected at the Transfer Station and transported to a processing facility (such as New Milford Farms). After processing the material will be returned to Kent as usable compost.

The “PAYT” component of the pilot involves material which cannot be diverted from the waste stream. In return for their user fee – expected to be a discounted rate from the current annual fee - Transfer Station customers will receive a fixed number of trash bags per week. If they need additional bags they will pay an additional fee. It is important to note that participation will be voluntary during the pilot – Transfer Station customers who don’t wish to participate can continue to pay an annual fee as they have in the past.

Wendy Murphy suggested that there be a focus on messaging about the waste crisis in addition to the savings, as Transfer Station customers may not be sufficiently incentivized by the savings. Jen asked the Commission to partner with HERRA in launching the pilot. She is grateful for our support. *The Commission will share and support the Town meeting.*

Wendy asked whether Kent’s schools and restaurants might participate in the pilot. Jen thought schools could be able to participate if they delivered their organic waste to the Transfer Station.

Jean Speck attended a recent Chamber of Commerce meeting to share information about the grant and pilot.

A. Town Clean-Up.

The Commission planned the celebration at the Transfer Station signalling the end of the April Earth Day Clean-up. Jen Heaton-Jones said that next year HERRA can arrange for free safety vests and garbage bags for the Clean-Up. She was glad to know of our efforts and will share our Facebook posts on social media.

B. Jos reported that Bruce Bennett arranged for a Scarlet Oak to be planted in front of the Frontier Building by students on Friday April 29th at 2pm. We do not yet have information about the cost of the tree, but expect it to be \$300 or less. An indoor program at the school will follow the planting. *Melissa will follow up with Kent Greenhouse regarding the possibility of obtaining three shrubs to replace those which didn’t survive in the KCS Outdoor Classroom area.*

C. Right to Farm Ordinance.

The Commission discussed the purpose and intent of the Right to Farm Ordinance and how it should be administered. The Commission believes that the Ordinance is being misapplied by the Board of Selectmen. *Jean Speck asked the Commission to discuss and submit amendments to the Ordinance which could clarify this intent, which she would then submit to Town Counsel. The Commission agreed to focus on this at its next meeting.*

D. POCD. Jos reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission will meet to review revisions to the Conservation Subdivision Regulations tomorrow. The materials for the meeting are available in the meeting folder. Jos summarized the proposed changes, which the Commission on balance supports.

Updates (as needed):

A. Spring Break Library Program. Carol, with Wendy’s assistance, did a wonderful job planning and providing this program.

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- B. Kent Municipal Open Space Acquisition. Tabled.
 - C. Housatonic Herbicide Working Group (HHWG). The HHWG's press release was published. Thus far the railroad has not responded to the group's requests to meet and discuss reducing environmental risks associated with its current program of herbicide application.
 - D. Green Energy Task Force. No update.
 - E. Sustainable CT. No update
 - F. Legislative Watch List:
The Commission discussed HB 6486: EPR for Tires, which is likely to pass the House soon. She encouraged members of the Commission to reach out to Kent's representative (Rep. Maria Horn) with their support.
5. Correspondence. None.
6. Adjourn. There being no further business before the Commission and upon the motion of Melissa seconded by Wendy the meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday May 10th @ 7:00pm
Respectfully submitted by: Connie Manes, Chair

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