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**By Darlene Brady at 10:57 am, Mar 14, 2024**



# TOWN OF KENT

Conservation Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 13, 2024 @ 7:00pm

In attendance:

Connie Manes

Wendy Murphy

Jean Speck

Jos Spelbos

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## Call to order

1. A quorum being present, Commission Chair Connie Manes called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.
2. Accept/Amend Agenda. *Upon a motion by Mike Benjamin seconded by Wendy Murphy, the commissioners voted unanimously to accept the agenda.*
3. Accept/Amend Minutes
  - A. Regular Meeting January 10, 2024. The draft minutes were amended at para 8Ai to reflect that the Bachrachs contributed \$250 to the tree planted on Swift Lane. *Upon a motion by Wendy seconded by Mike, the minutes as amended were unanimously approved.*
  - B. Regular Meeting February 14, 2024. *Upon a motion by Wendy seconded by Connie, the minutes of the February 14, 2024, Regular Meeting were unanimously approved.*
4. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Liddy Baker emailed her written report to all commissioners prior to the meeting for their review.
5. Public Comment. No members of the public were present at the meeting.
6. Old Business
  - Discussion Items*
    - A. April Events
      - i. Town Clean Up. A google form has been developed and shared out within the Conservation Commission's social media account recruiting participants. Connie will email the form to last year's participants. HRRA will provide a box of bags, 100 gloves, and 10 vests for the effort. Jean arranged for the Kent Volunteer Fire Department to provide gloves needed to supplement those provided by HRRA. The Chamber of Commerce will cosponsor and contribute \$200 to the Commission's expenses for bags, thank you gifts, and cakes for South Kent School. Connie displayed the prototype for the "thank you" bags, which we will distribute when participants pick up their bags/gloves. Connie will reach out to Father Klotz at South Kent School regarding the school's participation this year. Mike will reach out to Megan Solkonicki at the Kent School to see if the students can participate. Connie will contact the state about cleaning Rtes 7 and 341.

Once we have the roster of people participating, we will need to get their supplies to them. The

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commissioners agreed to distribute supplies at two locations on the weekend of April 6-7 for 2 hr periods. One pickup will be outside the IGA, and one at the Transfer Station. During the pickup events we can also seek to recruit additional participants.

There will be no end-event celebration this year at the Transfer Station. We can celebrate and share the community's success on social. Rick Osbourne has agreed to accept collected trash at the Transfer Station; we will not have it held to the side for a photo as in the past (too stinky and attracts animal pests).

- ii. KCS Arbor Day Program. Jos Spelbos spoke with Ane Starr at Kent Center School. The Arbor Day committee met and determined that they would like to plant a tree at the Kent Firehouse this year. Bruce Bennett suggested that the students choose the tree from among a list of suitable native species. Jos has been in touch with the KVFD for their permission and engagement. The Arbor Day program will be on April 26<sup>th</sup>.
  - iii. Kent Memorial Library Childrens' Earth Day Program. Carol Franken has arranged for the program, scheduled for April 18<sup>th</sup>. All commissioners are welcome to come and help.
- B. Street Trees. The commissioners discussed a grant program that Bruce Bennett has identified as a potential source of funding for planting trees in the Village Center: the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Urban Forestry Grant. Applications are due April 17<sup>th</sup>. It is unclear if the Town of Kent is eligible to apply for this grant as the grant guidelines clearly state it is for disadvantaged communities identified on an associated map and Kent is not among these. Bruce has said that nonetheless DEEP is happy to have our application. Wendy will determine whether this is accurate.

The commissioners next discussed what Kent would apply for, if able to apply. It was not clear what the budget or scope of work might be, although it would likely further the work Bruce and Jos have done to map places and properties in town where trees might be planted. To make sufficient progress on a grant application should one be available, the commissioners determined that Jos, Bruce, and Wendy should work together to compose an application for submission by Bruce as Kent's Tree Warden, with the support of the Commission.

Should Kent be unable to apply we will look for alternative funding sources as well as continue our work to set parameters and a budget for street tree planting this fall.

Wendy reported that Bruce will deliver a program about trees and their many and diverse benefits at the Kent Memorial Library during the Chamber of Commerce's new Spring event on May 4, 2024.

*Updates (as needed)*

- C. Green Energy Task Force. Wendy and Jean reported that there will be a meeting of representatives from several towns and CT DEEP on March 20, 2024, to learn more about the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program and how the towns might make use of funding through the program. The grant may be for charging stations that can accommodate at least 4 cars at a time; the availability of locations that can accommodate this may be a limiting factor.

Jean reported that the Northwest Hills Council of Governments is exploring how northwest corner towns might make use of federal funds available through the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Act. Two focal areas for this funding include solar panels on affordable housing, and climate-friendly zoning regulations.

- D. Housatonic Herbicide Working Group. Connie noted that Rep. Horn and Sen. Harding had sponsored a

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raised bill addressing Railroad Spraying (HB 5219); the Environment Committee heard testimony at its hearing on February 28<sup>th</sup> about the bill, and it did not move forward.

- E. Materials Management in Kent. The Transfer Station is displaying the poster sharing the successful diversion of organics from non-recyclable solid waste. Jean noted that the SAYT/Organics pilot program was only funded for one year and it is unclear whether the town will continue it after June. Connie will send an inquiry to the Selectmen and Town Treasurer.
- F. POCD. No update.
- 7. New Business.
  - A. State Legislative Session. Connie reviewed a list of bills (noted within the agenda) raised by the Environment Committee and their status. The commission will continue to follow proposed legislation as the session continues.
- 8. Correspondence. None. Connie reminded the commissioners of her impending retirement as Chair in June 2024.
- 9. Adjourn. *There being no further business before the Commission and upon the motion of Mike seconded by Connie, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.*

*NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Wednesday April 10th @ 7:00pm*

Respectfully submitted by: Connie Manes, Chair

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