

MINUTES OF MAY 23, 2018 MEETING

A meeting of the Longmeadow Conservation Commission was called to order at 7:00 P.M. on May 23, 2018 in the conference room at the Longmeadow Police Station.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair, Al Laakso, David Dumais, Stephen Gazillo, Wayne Ottani; **Absent:** Andrea Chasen, John Bresnahan, Peter Bouvier.

OTHERS PRESENT: David Sagan from Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING: The minutes of April 11, 2018 were accepted as presented. All in favor.

TREASURER'S REPORT: No report submitted at this meeting.

The CC indicated that the meeting was for informational purposes as there were no new projects to be reviewed.

DISCUSSION WITH DAVID SAGAN – The Refuge is looking into the possibility of installing a 16' x 20' viewing deck and canopy with a 40' elevated and ADA-accessible walkway within the Refuge's property on Pondsides Road in Longmeadow, similar to a wood structure currently in use in Hadley, MA (pictures shown). The entire structure has adjustable elevation thru the use of ledger-locked legs (as opposed to a standard sink-in post structure). The intent is to provide accessible views for the general public as the spot is already an informal viewing point, especially for bird watchers, and could allow accommodations for potential community projects such as outdoor classrooms. His organization has received a grant for the metro area and would likely partner with the organization Sustainable Springfield to develop the structure and more outdoor programs, such as the currently-funded bird viewing program for the students and general public in the Springfield area and its surrounding communities. The Refuge is seeking input from the Commission as to which would be the potential requirements and application path to follow as they wish to gather building materials during the summer and complete construction sometime in the Fall. Chair Al Laakso indicated that the proposed location for the structure is the old Birnie Rd and the abutting properties belong to Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge, Town of Longmeadow and Conservation Commission who are required to be notified in the event that the application is in the form of a Notice of Intent (NOI). He also pointed to the proximity of artesian wells but it appears that the potential wood structure would have no impact in the wells' accessibility. Commissioner Ottani raised concerns about vandalism but David Sagan indicated that the Refuge is self-insured and would handle any potential damages. Commissioner Dumais added that, since the organization promotes outdoor classroom projects when funds are available, it would be helpful to look into the possibility of repurposing some of what will eventually be old DPW offices for such activities. On another note, David Sagan added that Cynthia Boettner is retiring and the organization is looking into candidates that will continue Cynthia's work to address water chestnut invasions in the CT river; he also

pointed out that this year there will be no youth volunteer programs to keep up with trail maintenances at various locations due to funding cuts, so the organization will try to provide the service with in-house volunteers whenever possible.

The CC praised David Sagan for idea of a viewing deck and the benefits it can provide to the community and looks forward to reviewing a more detailed proposal in the near future.

DISCUSSION WITH STEPHEN GAZILLO – Commissioner Stephen Gazillo discussed his experience while attending the recent Fannie Stebbins Tree Planting & Site Tour, calling the event a success despite the damp weather. He also raised his concern about any future action that may be taken to address the railroad crossing at Bark Haul Rd, as it has been announced that service between New Haven-Hartford-Springfield will be increased by 23 passenger trains daily (northbound and southbound combined) starting in June. He indicates that federal and/or state grants may be available and, whenever possible, should be actively pursued by all parties involved to financially aid the project.

OTHER BUSINESS – Chair Laakso proceeded to inform all members present of the current developments:

- Efforts to address flooding on Bark Haul Rd. due to the presence of a beaver dam are ongoing as water accumulation near the dam was estimated between 6’ and 8’ above the original flow line of the culvert pipe in the location. The Commission issued an Emergency Certification Form and the Town’s Board of Health issued an emergency 10-day beaver permit to address the matter. Longmeadow DPW has been working in stages, water will flow again into the river soon. The MSPCA may help the Town of Longmeadow with grant funds to allow for the installation of humane beaver deceivers to prevent this issue from occurring again.
- This season Farmer Tom Baggett will be planting corn and squash (cabbage planting unsuccessful due to recurring deer intervention) and will expedite the removal of debris from damaged field coverings at the request of Chair Laakso.
- The Commission has seen an uptick in general inquiries from homeowners and prospective buyers now that the weather has improved and the real estate market is active.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bianca Damiano
Secretary