

Town of Stonington Conservation Commission  
Minutes of a Regular Meeting held on November 28, 2022  
Police Station Department Meeting Room, 173 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT

**1. Call to order** - Chairman Stuart Cole called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm. Members present were Frances Hoffman and Michael Schefers. Member Ben Baldwin participated remotely via FaceTime. Members RaeVen Kelly Dinwoodie, Jim Friedlander, and Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan were not present. Members of the public were present.

**2. Review of Town Developments and Proposals**

**a. PZ2230RA Marc Lotti (Mystic River Farm, LLC) – Zoning Regulation Amendment to remove the word “rabbits” from ZR 2.12 Prohibited Uses, in order to allow for the “keeping, breeding, and raising” of rabbits within the Town.** Mr. Lotti described the regulation amendment. He is a member of Mystic River Farm, LLC which owns 18.17-acre 315 North Stonington Road and currently has a building or buildings under construction. It is not known why rabbits have been excluded by zoning. Plans for the property were not discussed. Ben Baldwin said that perhaps rabbits have been excluded due to transmittable diseases. He said he had read of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease, not mentioned in the application text, which might be a concern should it spread locally to the New England Cottontail rabbit. However, he did not find evidence of the concern about diseases spreading between farmed rabbits and wild rabbits, such as there is with avian flu. Frances Hoffman said that while we don’t have hard information, there is no compelling reason not to allow the farming of rabbits. **MOTION:** The Conservation Commission endorses the regulation amendment without comment (Michael Schefers, Frances Hoffman). Passed unanimously.

**MOTION:** Move to New Business item (Michael Schefers, Ben Baldwin). Passed unanimously.

**5. New Business**

**a. Discussion of increase to Barn Island Field Trip account in 2023-2024 budget** – Stuart Cole described the history of the Commission funding educational field trips of Town school children to Spellman Pond and Barn Island, initially with Bob Dewire of Naturescapes and more recently with NESS. The contribution largely goes toward school bus cost and NESS fundraises for the balance of their cost. Stuart Cole is asking that the Commission’s funding be increased from about \$5,400 to \$6,200 which is entirely used for the field trips. Michael Schefers noted that specific projects, like the Open Space Plan update, might be funded individually and not out the Commission’s budget. **MOTION:** Increase budget request to \$6,200 (Michael Schefers, Ben Baldwin). Michael Schefers, Ben Baldwin and Stuart Cole were in favor; Frances Hoffman abstained. The motion passed.

**b. Zoning Update** – Carlene Donnarummo said that she had attended a Planning and Zoning Commission meeting regarding the rewriting of the Zoning Regulations and that she was concerned about proposed changes to the which would allow detention basins within the front yard setback and allow fragmented open space in the Open Space Development regulation. We will ask Keith Brynes about the proposed changes and encourage attendance at the upcoming Zoom meetings.

**3. Old Business**

**a. Dam Committee** – Stuart Cole described recent dam removal projects.

**b. Discussion of Stonington’s 200 Greatest Roadside Trees** – The list of trees of note was described and it was noted that trees are not being replaced, other groups like the Beautification Committee have planted trees, and a survey of town managed trees such as Stonington Borough’s or New London’s has been suggested by a past tree warden.

**d. Discussion of 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development** – and **f. Discussion of process for preparing and adopting new Open Space Plan** – Michael Schefers said the Open Space Plan Committee will meet in in January. The CC is looking for a volunteer to attend POCD Implementation Committee meetings.

**g. Discussion of invasive species in Stonington** – An invasive bamboo was spotted by Stuart Cole; will keep tabs.

**6. Review of draft minutes – 7/25/22 – MOTION:** To approve the minutes for the meeting held on 7/25/2022 as written (Michael Schefers, Ben Baldwin). Passed unanimously with an abstention by Frances Hoffman.

**7. Adjournment** - **MOTION:** To adjourn the meeting (Michael Schefers, Frances Hoffman). Passed unanimously at 8:31 pm.

Minutes submitted by



Ben Baldwin  
Secretary, Town of Stonington Conservation Commission

Approved at a Regular meeting  
on 1/23/2023