

Town of Stonington Conservation Commission
Minutes of a Regular Meeting held on April 25, 2022
Police Station Department Meeting Room, 173 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT

a. Call to order - Chairman Stuart Cole called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. Members present were Ben Baldwin, Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan, and Michael Schefers. Member RaéVen Kelly Dinwoodie joined by video call. Member Jim Friedlander was not present.

b. Review of Town Developments and Proposals

1. PZ2208SD & GPP Christie Properties, LLC – *Subdivision and Groundwater Permit applications for an 8-lot subdivision of a 38.78-acre parcel. Property located on North Stonington Rd. (CT Route 201), Stonington. Assessor's Map 115 Block 1, Lot 2. Zone GBR-130.* Michael Christie, the applicant, described the proposed subdivision of the former Wychwood Farms property on the town line, near a large barn in North Stonington and opposite Al Harvey Road. Keith Brynes had distributed PDF copies of the application by email. The 8 lots are made up of 7 residential building lots, 4 front and 3 rear, plus a 15% open space set aside lot to be transferred to Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. for integration into the abutting Hoffman Evergreen Preserve. Lots range from 3.03 to 7.56 acres, larger than the minimum of 2.98 or 5.97 acres required by the zone. Mr. Christine said he considered an Open Space Development design, but that it would require construction of a paved road and stormwater drainage as opposed to the conventional design which will have paved shared driveways for all but Lot 2B, minimizing disruption of stone walls along the frontage. Sightlines require some regrading between the wall and the road and the removal of brush, but will preserve trees shown on the Sightline Demonstration Plan. Ben Baldwin noted that this farmland, particularly the fields and pentway, are part of an iconic agricultural view in this part of Stonington and it seems a shame that the subdivision could not accommodate them so that the new residences are located at the edge of the fields and not in the very center of the pentway. Mr. Christie said that he expects the lot owners to preserve or move stone walls, particularly on the northeast-most lot, the one closest to the barn. It was noted that the 5.85-acre open space set aside meets the 15% requirement, but will have no access except from the abutters and the balance of the Hoffman Evergreen Preserve. Ben Baldwin asked that monumentation be installed for the open space which is not shown on the plan. **MOTION:** We approve the use of 15% open space set aside, to be part of the abutting Hoffman Evergreen Preserve of Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. (Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan, RaéVen Kelly Dinwoodie). Passed unanimously.

c. Old Business

2. Discussion of Stonington's 200 Greatest Roadside Trees – Michael Christie noted that blinding of ash trees is due to emerald ash borer and he had removed many for homeowners. He also noted that the town's use of road salt instead of a salt-sand mix has been the final blow to many stressed roadside trees, particularly sugar maples.

4. Discussion of 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development – It was noted that Erika Liebling is a member of the POCD Implementation Committee and perhaps she might serve as our representative on the POCDIC.

5. Discussion of updates to 2007 Open Space Plan – Michael Schefers proposed the May meeting have the update as its focus and discuss how to get public input.

e. New Business

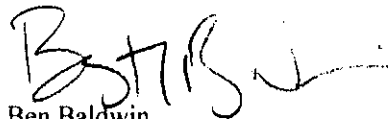
1. Consideration of funding for New England Science and Sailing Foundation (NESS) for Stonington elementary school nature programs. Stuart Cole described the long history of the Commission funding nature study field trips each spring to Spellman Park for all 3rd graders and to Barn Island for 5th graders. NESS (New England Science & Sailing Foundation) provides the trips using their personnel for \$4,400 and bussing costs \$1,200. NESS took over from Bob Dewire of Naturescapes several years ago after his review of their program. **MOTION:** Spend \$5,600 to NESS for field trips (Michael Schefers, Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan). Passed unanimously.

Other New Business: Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan said the town needs a dog park, like those of Groton and Westerly.

f. Review of draft minutes – 1/24/22 – MOTION: To approve the minutes for the last meeting held on 1/24/2022 as written (Michael Schefers, Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan). Passed unanimously.

g. Adjournment - **MOTION:** To adjourn the meeting (Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan). Passed unanimously at 8:45 pm. Chairman Stuart Cole said email is the best way to share agendas and documents and should be watched.

Minutes submitted by



Ben Baldwin

Secretary, Town of Stonington Conservation Commission

Approved at a regular meeting on 5/23/2022.