

**Conservation Commission Minutes**  
**Tuesday, June 16, 2015**  
**Town Hall Meeting Room, Old Town Rd.**  
**5:00pm**

**Present:** Members: Chair Ned Phillips, Jr., Vice Chair Fred Leeder, David Roosa, John Hopf, Marea Mott, and Donald Littlefield. Absent: Leslie Slate. Present in the audience Town Councilors: Norris Pike, Mark Emmanuelle, Alan MacKay, Town Manager Nancy Dodge, Town of New Shoreham Highway Supervisor Mike Shea, Marc Tillson, and Renwick Tweedy. Also present Administrative Assistant Teresa Chmiel for the recording of the minutes.

**Call to Order**

Chair Ned Phillips, Jr. called the regular meeting of the Conservation Commission to order at 5:00pm.

**Discuss/Act on CRMC Public Notice dated April 27, 2015** for consideration of the application of Philip & Alicia Hammarskjold, Plat 19, Lot 15-1.

Edward Avizinis with Natural Resource Services, Inc. presented on behalf of Philip & Alicia Hammarskjold. Mr. Avizinis presented the Proposed Wetland Habitat Management Plan both existing and proposed as well as the “Written Narrative in Support of Application to Alter a Freshwater Wetland for Champlin Farm Block Island”. He explained the application is under the review process with CRMC.

The consideration is to remove some of the water willow weed (*Decondon Verticillatus*) that is encroaching by dredging to a depth that will prohibit the water willow from growing out as well as an effort to restore the warm water fishery. Mr. Avizinis pointed out and discussed the following as shown on the existing and proposed Wetland Habitat Management Plan:

- Establish a 25’ buffer zone around the pond with planted native brush;
- Dredging a 3’ – 4’ depth with a suction hose, the material will be removed to dewatering bags allowing water to drain out, the residue will then be incorporated into the fields;
- Mr. Hopf asked about the water source for the pond, Mr. Avizinis acknowledged the pond is ground water supported/feed;
- First round of invasive shrub applications will be the cut-stem treatment; spot treatment of selective herbicide and monitoring is recommended in the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> year;
- Mr. Hopf asked if a liner will be placed in the pond, Mr. Avizinis answered no;
- The willow weed will be cut by hand, manually removing 11,608 square feet of willow weed from the pond;
- The applicant is proposing a 6’ x 20’ dock;
- The applicant is proposing a 10’ wide stone and gravel access path as shown on the plan; and

- The proposed consideration of the application is to achieve a balance with native shrub to be planted around the buffer zone will provide nesting and food, which will increase the overall habitat of the land.

The Conservation Commission discussed the following concerns:

- The Commission questioned the driving factor between two (2) species of fish (Sunfish and Largemouth Bass) versus 66 known species of birds;
- The Commission stated Largemouth Bass fish are not native to Block Island, but were introduced about 50 years ago;
- The Conservation Commission outlined the hard work and success in banning the use of pesticides on Town property;
- The Commission is in the process of sending an advisory to the Town Council to ban the pesticide Roundup; therefore
- The Commission does not support the proposed treatment with the active ingredient found in Roundup to eliminate invasive plants; and
- This iconic landscape is the second most photographic site on Block Island; the Commission is not in support of the removal or delineation of the pond to a generic oval pond.

Mr. Leeder made a motion, seconded by Ms. Mott, to send an Unfavorable Advisory to the Town Council for consideration of Philip & Alicia Hammarskjold's application to Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) File Number: 2015-03-037 for Plat 19, Lot 15-1 based on the following findings of fact:

- Based on the consideration of the use of herbicides and pesticides, the Commission does not support or endorse the use of these applications. The Commission was the instrumental driving force behind the Pesticide Reduction Policy, adopted by the Town Council on May 20, 2009. This policy bans pesticides on the Town's public properties and facilities and encourages all citizens to make every effort to participate in this endeavor on their own property;
- The Commission is concerned with the amount of fill that will be removed from the pond, based on the effect of nutrient removal through the suction dredging of 45,596 square feet of pond area;
- The Property is the second most photographic site on the Island. The Commission does not support the delineation or the removal of this iconic uniquely shaped pond to a generic oval pond; and
- The Commission does not support the process of restoring or creating a new habitat. The Commission is not in favor of destroying a habitat of 66 known species of birds by proposing to clean out the pond in an effort to restore the warm water fisheries for one species of fish.

6 Ayes (Phillips, Leeder, Roosa, Hopf, and Mott)  
1 Absent (Slate)

1 Nays (Littlefield)

**Review/Act on locations of snow fencing repairs of the dune restoration areas.**

Mr. Hopf and Mr. Roosa met prior to the meeting to determine areas in need of fence repairs. Mr. Hopf reported enough fencing is available to install and repair at Mansion Beach.

**Discuss/Act on whether to test jute (sand fencing) material.**

Mr. Leeder discussed the availability of funds for sand fencing material that Town Councilman Chris Warfel mention in the last Conservation Commission meeting. Ms. Dodge was asked if the funds were budgeted for the jute material and she answered she didn't remember an allocation for this material.

Mr. Phillips and Mr. Hopf discussed the reasons why they did not want to use nor test the jute material as discussed in the last Conservation Commission meeting. Mr. Leeder expressed a wish to test the jute material, no other Commissioners volunteered.

**Discuss/Act on installing a split rail fence or other material to discourage people staying off the dunes along Corn Neck Road (across from the Beachead Restaurant).**

No action was taken.

**Discuss/Act on banning the herbicide Roundup.**

**Discuss/Follow-up/Act on alternative replacements of Roundup.**

Mr. Leeder submitted a draft copy of a letter addressed to the Town Council outlining the health issues of using Roundup and the countries that have banned or are in the process of banning this product. Discussion ensued with Councilors Mr. MacKay and Mr. Emmanuel to propose banning the Roundup Herbicide Island wide. Mr. Shea asked the Commission about enforcement. Mr. Emmanuel asked the Commission to attend a Town Council meeting as education is equally as important and will make a difference. Due to the discussion that ensued the last sentence of the draft letter was changed.

**Draft a letter to the Town Council in support of aeration method of composting.**

Mr. Phillips, Jr. noted this was on their agenda last month as requested from Town Councilman Chris Warfel. The Commission was in agreement of the Island wide composting. Town Councilman Mark Emmanuel spoke from the audience and stated this is a super idea and long overdue. A letter of support will be address to the Town Council.

**Adjournment.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm in a motion by Mr. Hopf and seconded by Mr. Littlefield

6 Ayes (Phillips, Leeder, Littlefield, Roosa, Hopf, and Mott)  
1 Absent (Slate)

0 Nays

Respectfully submitted  
Teresa L. Chmiel  
Administrative Assistant Building and Land Use  
Minutes approved: July 14, 2015