

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

JUNE 22, 2023 – 6:00PM (VIA ZOOM)

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm.
2. Roll Call. Present: Maria Grace, Tom Blagden, Susan Rand, Zach Sadow, Abby Conroy (Land Use Director), Miles Todaro (Land Use Tech Specialist) and Georgia Petry (Recording Secretary). Lee Potter arrived later in the meeting.
3. Approval of Agenda. Approved as submitted.
4. Approval of the Minutes of March 2, 2023. So Moved by T. Blagden, seconded by S. Rand and unanimously Approved.
5. Approval of the Minutes of April 6, 2023. So Moved by L. Potter, seconded by T. Blagden and unanimously Approved. (Tabled, then completed just before the end of the meeting, with L. Potter in attendance.)
6. Approval of the Minutes of Minutes of May 4, 2023. So Moved by Z. Sadow, seconded by S. Rand and unanimously Approved.
7. Public Comment – None
8. Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Discussion
Michael Klemens, as Sr. Consultant to the Land Use office, led the discussion. He noted that the Inventory and Assessment sections have been too difficult to separate, so they are being put into a joint section. M. Grace indicated that Chapter 7: Agriculture, was mostly good for the POCD, but did highlight some areas that would be better for the NRI (Natural Resource Inventory). A. Conroy pointed out that this draft includes comments from the IWWC (Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission). M. Grace would like the Inventory and Assessment sections in the NRI. Mr. Klemens suggested there could be a summary of those to be in the POCD, with a link to the NRI, similar to Chapter 8. A. Conroy commented that the Sections have been cut down to an approachable size, including merging Inventory and Assessment. M. Grace pointed out that the NRI is educational, makes recommendations and advises people about their properties. A. Conroy added that the POCD is a policy guidance document for use by Town staff, Commissions, etc. There was lengthy discussion about whether the elements of the narrative belong in the POCD or the NRI; all members had questions, comments and suggestions. M. Grace wants to have strategies listed in the POCD, such as how to encourage

young farmers to farm here and making it sustainable or how to promote agritourism. There was discussion about agricultural lands being important habitat for wildlife versus the need for farmers to productively use the land. It was suggested to include case studies in the final POCD draft. Under B. Assessment, M. Klemens suggested expanding the regional component of farming; Allen Cockerline will be asked about updating the data being used. Other resources may be explored also. Under Pt. 3, Z. Sadow suggested breaking it up into 2 separate points; one talking about the current age of farmers and another about newer agricultural opportunities, including mentioning community education programs. Under Pt. 4, he suggested considering using cannabis production, as an example of how farms are looking to diversify their revenue sources. Under Pt. 5, he asked if foundation-operated farms and addressing community concerns about destination weddings are 2 separate points; he expressed that it should be one or the other, if looking to encourage, not discourage people. M. Klemens and M. Grace suggested that the C. Strategies section would address these concerns. The Strategies were discussed; most of Points 4 & 5 will go in the NRI, not the POCD.

Chapter 8: Natural resources, wetlands and conservation

M. Klemens and A. Conroy described the proposed new language and revisions to this section of the draft. A. Conroy suggested that the revisions should be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting, July 6, 2023. M. Grace indicated that most of this Chapter 8 should go into the NRI. M. Klemens and A. Conroy suggested giving this Commission the revised POCD document and the separated out information for the NRI.

M. Klemens asked that Chapter 7: Agriculture, be reviewed again and agreed upon, with the consideration and inclusion of the suggested comments and changes. Under A. Inventory, L. Potter asked about including tax benefits for homeowners, who may sell hay, as an extra incentive. The PA-490 program was discussed. (At this time, First Selectman Curtis Rand joined the meeting) He noted that there will be a Town meeting the following week, to vote on a number of issues, including an exemption for farm equipment; most other exemptions are covered under PA-490. He pointed out that approximately 20,000 acres are in some sort of conservation in Salisbury, more than half of the Town total. He added that Salisbury continues to have the lowest mill rate in the State, a very good incentive. M. Klemens commented on the need for critical mass for farms to be functional, especially when fragmented and also how farms are valued. C. Rand pointed out that young farmers are eligible for grants through NRCS and USDA; there is some Town land that could be devoted to that purpose. He added that he would like to comment on the forest issues and would be willing to schedule visits, in time for the July 6th meeting. M. Klemens asked if anything was missing on strategies; M. Grace will send her additions. A. Conroy will re-send the Chapters for the July 6th meeting, Prioritizing Chapter 8. M. Klemens asked for specific comments to be sent to him and A. Conroy.

9. Vernal Pool Study – No update

10. NRI Discussion – will be at the July 6, 2023 meeting, which will focus on Chapter 8.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28pm.