

West Newbury Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 6:00 pm, April 15, 2021, Remote Participation via Zoom.

Members Present: Via remote participation Wendy Reed (acting as Chair), Dawne Fusco, Judy Mizner, and Margaret Hawkins. Town Manager Angus Jennings present in Town Offices and participating remotely.

At the outset, Ms. Reed read the following statement: “Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the West Newbury Conservation Commission will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible.”

Ms. Reed noted that the meeting was being recorded.

Discussion: Establishment of Agent Hiring Subcommittee

Hiring Subcommittee

The Commission noted that after the prior Conservation Agent Jay Smith retired, a hiring subcommittee consisting of Judy Mizner and Wendy Reed conducted an initial review of candidates’ resumes and initial interviews in executive session. Ms. Mizner noted that Mr. Smith has agreed to assist as interim Conservation Agent until a new hire is on board.

By unanimous roll call vote, the Commission elected Judy Mizner and Molly Hawkins as the Hiring Subcommittee.

Job Description; Coordination/Job Sharing with Other Towns/Advertising

The Commission discussed revisions to the Agent’s job description to reflect recent developments increasing land agent duties and the prospect for an administrative assistant assuming potentially 5 hours of admin work. The Commission noted that the more attractive the position, the more likely more experienced candidates who will remain long-term will apply. *The hiring subcommittee agreed to work on revisions to the job description, with Ms. Reed’s documents to assist in the process.*

Mr. Jennings said that it may be possible to develop a full time job with benefits if local towns in the area joined forces to hire a shared Conservation Agent. Hamilton, which shared Mr. Comins’ services with West Newbury, will be looking for a replacement, and Groveland may be seeking a Conservation Agent. The Commission discussed the need to develop means of coordinating if this were to occur. *It was agreed that Mr. Jennings will reach out to his counterparts in other towns about this.*

In the last Agent hiring, the Commission advertised with the Massachusetts Municipal Association (which had a fee) and with the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (which had no fee and produced the two candidates). Mr. Jennings recommended advertising in both venues and

said that his office could pay the fees.

Discussion: Wetlands protection bylaw

Mr. Jennings said that the Town Counsel had provided the Select Board a memo with comments on the proposed wetlands bylaw. The legal concern centered on language indicating that the Select Board and Town Counsel “shall” defend Commission decisions in the event of appeal, which, he asserted, was an improper imposition on executive discretion. Other Town Counsel comments concerned potential impacts of the bylaws, such as expanded definitions of vernal pools and the term pond. *Mr. Jennings agreed to ask Town Counsel to communicate the specifics of his concerns with the Commission.* The Commission also discussed questions raised at the Select Board meeting such as whether the new bylaw would regulate roadway crack filling (no) or mailbox post reinstallation (no).

Administrative Assistant Elisa Grammer offered to post on the Commission webpage revised bylaw provisions, an explanation of revised bylaw provisions, frequently asked questions about the bylaw, and other content that the Commission may develop.

Discussion: Other business

None

Adjournment

The Commission adjourned at 6:31pm.

Meeting Documents

None

Respectfully submitted