

CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 15, 2020

MEETING CONVENED: 7:00 p.m. GoToMeeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair George Irvine (7:45), Co-Chair Bob McDowell (presiding), Beth Chajes, Helga Huntley, Sheila Smith, MaryClare Matsumoto, Robyn O'Halloran

STAFF: Nichol Scheld, Administrative Professional I

Mr. McDowell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM AUGUST 11, 2020

Mr. McDowell asked for the approval of the August 11, 2020 meeting minutes.

MOTION BY MS. MATSUMOTO, SECONDED BY MS. CHAJES: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 6 TO 0.

AYE – CHAJES, HUNTLEY, MATSUMOTO, MCDOWELL, O'HALLORAN, SMITH.

NAY– 0.

ABSENT– IRVINE.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

3. CURTIS MILL PLANTING UPDATE – SHEILA SMITH

Ms. Scheld displayed Ms. Smith's sketch of the planting plan and Ms. Smith reported she had shared the plan with Tim Filasky, Director of Public Works and Water Resources. Ms. Smith specifically chose three plants deemed "keystone" by Dr. Doug Tallamy, UD, and informed the other plantings would also be beneficial to ensure insects would be available for other wildlife:

- River birch (keystone) – matures to large size
- Black cherry (keystone) – high insect benefit
- Red mulberry – many mulberries in the area were the invasive White mulberry
- Sassafras – suckering plant that would form colonies
- Sumac – suckering plant that would form colonies
- Grasses and wildflowers including golden rod (keystone), asters, joe-pye weed, phlox
- Grass and broom sedge
- *Viburnum prunifolium* black haw – large and beneficial for nesting and berries

- Chokeberry
- *Salix discolor* pussy willow (keystone)

Ms. Smith noted the two existing fishing spots must be preserved and said that Mr. Filasky suggested Pawpaw, a suckering plant, to create groves. She continued that Mr. Filasky stressed the top priority was water treatment. Ms. Smith revealed that Mr. Filasky approved the plan and noted there was plenty of time to address any issues. She intended to plant over the first or second week in November and said that Mr. Filasky would coordinate with Mr. Spadafino to have the area mowed so Ms. Smith could mulch the planting areas. She would request help to mulch and noted she would only need six to eight people to assist in planting. She was aiming to have a 100% success rate and explained the plants would be two-gallon pots and the planting time depended on when the area was mulched, which would be supplied by Mr. Filasky. She asked that any volunteers bring gallon jugs of water on planting day. She revealed she was considering establishing a Friends of Curtis Mill Waterworks to help maintain the area to keep invasive species down, pull weeds, and collect trash and discarded fishing litter. Mr. McDowell agreed that it was necessary to have visual maintenance and Ms. Smith said she was looking for buy-in. Ms. Scheld informed that the area was called the Curtis Water Treatment Plant and Ms. Smith suggested using the title Friends of Curtis Mill Park.

Ms. Matsumoto asked for the definition of a keystone plant and Ms. Smith replied that Dr. Tallamy was a UD entomologist and an established national figure in native plants and their ecological value regarding insect conservation. She continued that he created a list of the most valued plants for insects in the region and referred to them as keystone plants because they supported declining native insect populations, which were the keystone to the food chain. Mr. McDowell explained that keystone plants were so named after keystones in arches which keep the arches from collapsing. He was enthusiastic about planting black cherry to provide a food source for bugs and birds. It was Ms. Smith's opinion it was an important plant but one that most people did not prefer. Mr. McDowell asked if the mulch was leaf mulch and Ms. Smith confirmed and explained that Mr. Filasky would arrange to have a large delivery. Ms. Smith informed that Dr. Tallamy authored two books and would host an event at the Newark Free Library on October 11th and she encouraged the members to attend this virtual meeting. She said his books were titled Bringing Nature Home and Nature's Best Hope.

Ms. Matsumoto shared that she had sassafras and Pawpaw trees in her yard and assumed there was enough space for the plants to spread without encroaching on the flowers. Ms. Smith noted that Ms. Matsumoto's property could be more suitable for the trees but would cut the sassafras suckers, if necessary. Ms. Matsumoto and Ms. O'Halloran offered their assistance.

4. FLOODING AND RIPARIAN BUFFER EDUCATION – HELGA HUNTLEY

Dr. Huntley said she wanted to follow up with City staff to investigate plans to provide public education on proper riparian buffer care. She asked if she should speak to the Parks and Recreation Department and Ms. Scheld suggested she speak with Mr. Filasky first as Dr. Huntley had expressed concern at the last meeting that City staff mowed to the edge of the creek. Dr. Huntley said she would speak to Mr. Filasky about crafting a plan for public education and outreach. Mr. McDowell agreed that Mr. Filasky was the best person to contact and supported the measure.

Mr. McDowell pointed to the development on Elkton Road and thought the area where the crew installed plastic as a sediment fence should be more developed as a riparian buffer. He assumed many of the traffic islands would be concrete and noted one island had a sign stating it was sponsored by Former Mayor

Polly Sierer. He wondered if the CAC could adopt an island to develop as a demonstration garden with a sign indicating Newark was certified habitat friendly town. Ms. Smith revealed the program to sponsor an island cost \$600 year but did not know who ran the program or if Ms. Sierer still paid for the island. She liked the idea of having a public notice on being a habitat city but was hesitant to have wildlife plants on a busy road. Mr. McDowell stated he was not suggesting plants that would attract squirrels or rabbits and Ms. Smith said she was also concerned about birds. Mr. McDowell noted the City did not want big trees in the islands for safety reasons and believed there was a landfill in an area near Suburban Plaza. He explained the area was not prime real estate but was suitable for wildlife and believed the construction along the roads was a travesty to drainage. He assumed the crew would remedy the situation but suggested the CAC encourage better practices. He would investigate and return to the CAC. Ms. Scheld informed Parks and Recreation ran the sponsored plantings for the medians and Mr. McDowell hoped Parks would waive the fee if the CAC donated plants.

5. ANTI-IDILING AND PUBLIC EDUCATION – SHEILA SMITH

Ms. Smith read through previous minutes and intended to make a public comment at a Council meeting as well as contact her Councilperson and City Manager Coleman to determine next steps. She stressed it was a global warming and greenhouse gas issue that was not being addressed and Mr. McDowell believed the City should be doing better. Dr. Huntley revealed she witnessed various cars idling in parking lots and noted it would be helpful to hand drivers a card with the necessary information about idling. She looked forward to obtaining educational material to distribute. Ms. Smith noted Ms. O'Halloran previously presented information on anti-idling and thought it was a helpful tool. Ms. O'Halloran offered to design a card using information from her presentation but noted it would have to be approved by City staff prior to distribution and would speak to Ms. Gravell. Ms. Smith suggested having the card read Turn the Key, Be Idle Free on one side and list four ways how or four reasons why on the reverse. She hoped for a quick turnaround.

Ms. Chajes suggested that the cards indicate anti-idling was a law. Ms. Matsumoto suggested the Free Library could include the cards in book checkouts. Mr. McDowell suggested schools could also distribute the cards when in session. Ms. Smith noted that schools were one of the only places who had signs against idling but agreed parents needed reminders.

6. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST

Mr. McDowell complimented Dr. Huntley on the recycling article and promised to use it in his classroom as a reference for proper recycling. He informed the recycling center in the industrial park in Glasgow accepted Styrofoam, electronics, and various other materials. Ms. Chajes suggested she could include riparian buffers in her October article on stormwater runoff. Mr. McDowell asked if she intended to include information about the Rodney Dorm Project and Ms. Chajes confirmed. Dr. Huntley asked if the park had been named and Ms. Scheld explained City staff was waiting until they could hold a ribbon cutting ceremony to announce the name. Mr. McDowell expressed his appreciation for the park and was thankful the referendum passed with efforts from the CAC. Dr. Huntley asked that she be allowed to postpone producing articles until after November and Ms. O'Halloran offered to write an article for November. Ms. Smith wanted to brainstorm for more ideas and suggested the Plastic Straw Campaign as a future topic. Ms. O'Halloran asked if the Plastic Bag law began in January and suggested the January article be on plastics. Ms. Matsumoto suggested an article on composting coincide with the City's refresher on yard waste in the spring. She noted composting could be accomplished in various ways, including digging a hole next to plants to dispose of vegetable scraps. Ms. Smith stressed that no one was required to write an

article. Ms. O'Halloran offered to write the article if Ms. Matsumoto researched the topic. Mr. McDowell suggested she research small scale composting and revealed his daughter had a compost set-up in her apartment that was unnoticeable. He wanted to encourage and educate apartment and townhouse occupants to compost. Ms. O'Halloran agreed that many people thought composting was expensive but shared that she and her roommates built a composter for ten dollars. Dr. Huntley asked if Ms. O'Halloran wanted to brainstorm for a November topic but Ms. O'Halloran wanted to wait until October in case one of her classes presented a suitable topic. Ms. Chajes believed composting should be addressed in November because it was peak leaf collection season, and Ms. Matsumoto thought it was too soon but agreed leaves were an excellent source of mulch. Ms. Smith commented that leaves should be left under trees because many insect cocoons fell from branches into dead leaves only to be destroyed by raking and blowers. She stressed that leaf litter should remain with under trees. Ms. Chajes suggested the November topic address leaves and offered to write two articles in a row but then decided to collaborate with Ms. Smith. Ms. O'Halloran asked for a recap of the article schedule.

- October – Stormwater/Runoff, Beth Chajes
- November – Leave the Leaves, Beth Chajes, Sheila Smith
- December – Sustainability, Helga Huntley
- January – Plastic Bags, Robyn O'Halloran
- February – Annual Report, George Irvine
- March – Spotted Lanternfly, Sheila Smith
- April – Composting, MaryClare Matsumoto, Robyn O'Halloran

Ms. Matsumoto suggested an article address the spotted lanternfly, tree of heaven, and Japanese barberry. She reported that her house backed up to Redd Park and she often pulled up invasive Japanese barberry plants and her neighbor had a tree of heaven that was infested with the spotted lanternfly. She thought it would be helpful to suggest residents remove the plants in favor of others. Ms. Smith stated her last article was about invasive species and did not mention Japanese barberry but did include a list of references for alternatives. She agreed that the topic was not finished. Dr. Huntley asked if Ms. Matsumoto was suggesting a detailed article on the spotted lanternfly and Ms. O'Halloran agreed that not many people understood the issue and thought it was a good topic. Ms. Chajes asked when the lanternfly would emerge again, and Ms. Smith said it returned in the spring, but the eggs were now on tree trunks and resembled gray putty. She informed they could be scraped off and confirmed that residents needed to be better informed on solutions. Mr. McDowell read an article that reported success using a trap and Ms. Smith explained it was a netted circle trap. She then offered to write the article as part of her Master Naturalist Program and Mr. McDowell supported any natural measures versus pesticides. He recalled gypsy moth infestations were slowed with tree bands and wanted to educate residents on getting rid of the lanternfly's food source, using less or fewer pesticides, and keeping an eye on infestations. Ms. O'Halloran suggested the article be slated for March. Ms. Smith noted the November articles was for leaves and Ms. Chajes suggested including information on helping beneficial insects and the warning for lanternfly egg masses. Ms. Matsumoto asked when the annual report was due and suggested the February article be used to highlight the CAC's accomplishments which Mr. Irvine volunteered to write.

7. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

Ms. Matsumoto attended the virtual Planning Commission (PC) meeting on September 1st and informed the Commission was creating a Steering Committee that would be reviewing the five-year plan.

She explained Mr. Fortner spoke enthusiastically about having a CAC member as part of the Committee, but the PC did not feel that it was necessary because it was felt that the CAC should remain outside of the group and comment as any other committee. Some PC members feared a possible conflict that could lead to questioning who was in charge. She noted there would be publicly posted meetings and said that a member of the CAC could comment as a member of the public and could also apply to join as an at-large member of the Committee. She informed Mr. Fortner suggested having two or three at-large members and one CAC member which was then amended to no CAC representative and three to four at-large members. Dr. Huntley was disappointed to hear the PC put so little value on conservation and sustainability that the CAC was excluded from the Committee. Ms. Matsumoto noted the PC was down on membership, so the group was small and explained that Mr. Fortner argued in favor of sustainability and conservation, but she did not feel she could have changed the PC's opinion. Dr. Irvine asked if the meeting was the Planning Commission approving a steering committee for the redevelopment of the five-year development plan and Ms. Matsumoto confirmed. She informed the last redevelopment did not include a formal position for the CAC on the Committee and Dr. Huntley said that there was not a Committee and the last redevelopment was done by Mr. Fortner himself and included many workshops. She rewrote large sections of the proposed revision as a private citizen and shared them with Mr. Fortner. She noted the plan underwent the standard process and was approved by the PC and then approved by Council. Ms. Matsumoto reported there would be monthly meetings and Dr. Irvine assumed the PC objected to the procedural grounds that not all sister commissions would have a position and thought it was a valid point. He asked if Ms. Matsumoto assumed the PC was not keen on including conservation in the development plan. Ms. Matsumoto believed it was more an issue of making sure the CAC was not singled out for representation. She said the groups would be comprised of two representatives from the Planning Commission, one representative from UD, one representative from the Department of Planning and Development, three or four residents at-large, and representative(s) from the Newark Partnership; from the business and nonprofit community, and a representative from the development community. Dr. Irvine asked who developed the groups for the steering committee and Ms. Matsumoto assumed it was Mr. Fortner. She explained he presented the proposal a month ago and the Planning Commission offered some suggestions. She then said that Dr. Huntley contacted Mr. Fortner about having a CAC representative but that the Planning Committee voted on and approved the steering committee. Dr. Huntley confirmed Mr. Fortner was overseeing the revisions of the Comp Plan and believed he created the plan for planning. Ms. Smith believed Mr. Fortner was modeling the committee after the organization for the Sustainability Plan and that could be why he considered CAC representation, but she agreed with Ms. Huntley that the representation in the Committee was lopsided.

Dr. Irvine asked Ms. Matsumoto if the PC discussed the relationship between the Comp Plan and the Sustainability Plan and Ms. Matsumoto confirmed and repeated Mr. Fortner's positive comments regarding the CAC. Ms. Matsumoto wanted the CAC to be aware of the Committee's schedule to utilize public comment. She was unsure how the at-large positions would be selected and understood the City was attempting to diversify its boards and committees. Dr. Huntley explained the old procedure was for Mr. Fortner to compile a list and present it to City Council who would vote to approve the membership of the steering committee; however, there was an expectation the open positions would now be advertised through the new Diversity Initiative and individuals could apply. She did not know if it was for all positions or just at-large and noted the Planning Commission would approve the Committee versus Council. Mr. McDowell asked if anyone wanted to apply and Ms. Smith stated that all meetings would be open to the public and the CAC members could participate as such. Ms. Matsumoto did not want to be member of the Commission but would attend virtually when possible. Dr. Irvine suggested Ms. Matsumoto apply because he feared the composition of the Committee would trend towards growth and could come into contradiction with the Sustainability Plan. He stressed it was possible to have economic development in

an environmentally friendly way but thought if the PC was not willing to give the CAC a representative, then Ms. Matsumoto should apply for an at-large position. He suspected the Committee would promote growth because of the economic downturn and could be at the expense of the environment but admitted he could be wrong. Dr. Irvine asked Ms. Matsumoto if she would put herself forward but she thought it would be awkward since she was a CAC member. Ms. Smith pointed that Ms. Matsumoto was interested in attending as a resident and noted that Mr. Fortner included sustainability on every goal of his presentation to the Planning Commission, so she wanted at least one member of the Sustainability Plan be a member of the Committee. Dr. Huntley encouraged Ms. Matsumoto to apply and Ms. Matsumoto suggested a former member of the Sustainability Plan apply, especially if they were part of a less represented group that met the City's diversity goals. Dr. Huntley stated should was overcommitted and would not apply but thought there were not many people who active on the Sustainability Plan steering committee and believed it was appropriate to have a representative from CAC because it was charged with keeping track of the Sustainability Plan implementations. Dr. Irvine repeated that Ms. Matsumoto could offer input as a resident but thought she would have more influence as a Committee member, and she was hesitant to commit. Dr. Irvine asked when the Committee was making final cuts and Ms. Matsumoto wondering how the positions were advertised. Dr. Irvine suspected the PC could be compiling a short list and not advertising the vacancies. He suggested that she reach out to Mr. Fortner for details and was curious who gave the PC the power to set the steering committee. Dr. Huntley informed this was the first time there was a steering committee and Dr. Irvine suspected the CAC was not favored to set the steering committee because it was not in the CAC's charter. Ms. Smith asked Ms. Scheld if the minutes were available and Ms. Scheld said they were not. Ms. Matsumoto repeated that Mr. Fortner spoke in favor of including the CAC, but the members did not. Dr. Irvine commented it was the PC's prerogative and repeated his request that Ms. Smith discuss the process with Mr. Fortner. Ms. Scheld briefly described the application process.

(Secretary's note: the Planning Commission's Steering Committee is ad hoc and the vacancies were not advertised)

8. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Irvine noted the CAC had accomplished many goals over the last two years and was at the point where it could take on new efforts. He wanted the members to discuss areas of focus as a Commission and review the Sustainability Plan to choose a key goal to push as a policy agenda.

Ms. Matsumoto asked where the Straw Flyers stood. Dr. Huntley replied the Communications teams designed the flyers and she spoke to the Manager at Klondike Kate's who was happy to display the information but said the restaurant was currently restricted from having anything on the tables because of COVID. The Manager was happy to spread the word amongst the restaurant community and patrons to help the CAC with the marketing campaign. Ms. Matsumoto understood and asked if the intent was to hold off printing for a while. Dr. Irvine noted UD was not printing handouts because of social distancing and suggested electronic distribution was the appropriate avenue. He asked Dr. Huntley if the Communications team said how they would distribute the flyer. Dr. Huntley replied Communications designed the flyers for the CAC for their own discretion. Ms. Smith recalled David Tynan, Fire Marshal would distribute over the course of a few months and Dr. Huntley recalled the CAC needed to decide on which format was appropriate from flyers, table tents, et cetera. Ms. Smith suggested Ms. Gravell remind the group of what was decided, and Ms. Scheld stated the discussion was included in the last minutes. Ms. Matsumoto suggested waiting to print and asked if the CAC had written an article on straws. Dr. Irvine said the CAC emphasized straws in different ways, but he was open to an article for early next year.

Dr. Irvine suggested the CAC give the Communications Office ideas on how to use the flyer and wanted to provide guidance at the next meeting. Ms. Smith asked if Communications was reaching out to restaurant managers to inform them of the upcoming flyers and suggested they speak to their waitstaff. She suggested the staff explain the restaurants were cutting back on straws for environmental reasons and to request straws if needed. She wondered why the City could not speak to restaurant managers and supply the flyers to be hung at the wait stations and Dr. Irvine suspected it was a question of legality. He wanted to give staff creative ideas on distribution and for them to act on the resolution. Ms. Smith wanted the City to advertise its resolution.

9. NEXT MEETING – OCTOBER 13, 2020

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY DR. IRVINE, SECONDED BY MS. SMITH: TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Nichol Scheld
Administrative Professional I

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