

East Providence Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes

December 15, 2020

Online Zoom meeting

6:30 PM

Members present: James Boyd (Secretary), Greg Burnett, Mary Beth Dwyer, Ernie Germani (Vice Chair), Keith Gonsalves (Chair), Patrick Hanner (City Liaison) and Cheryl Vieira

Members absent: None

A. Call to Order: Chair Keith Gonsalves called the meeting to order at 6:32 P.M.

B. Review of Minutes: The November 17, 2020 meeting minutes were approved by the Commission following a motion to approve by E. Germani and seconded by P. Hanner.

Public Attendees: Wayne Barnes, John Carey, William Fazioli (EP City Planning Director), Johanna Walczak (City Planner), Carrie Drake, Rick Richards and Colgate Searle

C. Public Comment: Carrie Drake, Rick Richards and Colgate Searle introduced themselves as members of the Blackstone Park Conservancy. See New Business D.1.

D. New Business:

1. Greater Seekonk Wildlife Refugee: R. Richards, C. Searles and C. Drake spoke of developing momentum to create the Greater Seekonk Wildlife Refuge encompassing the shoreline of the Seekonk River in the Communities of Providence, Pawtucket and East Providence through community engagement, state and federal partner participation. The goal is to unify and connect uplands with the water to enhance environmental and ecological health, improve water quality and provide for public access to the Seekonk River. Future community meetings are being planned.
2. Tree initiatives, projects and partnerships: Johanna Walczak described ongoing activities and partnership with the East Providence Urban Forest Group, which promotes education and stewardship of tree resources within the City. She announced that the City had secured a RIDEM grant to inventory City trees with engagement of citizens. A Winter Forest event is being planned and will be announced and an Arbor Day event is being planned for April to plant trees at Hull Street Park. The Commission briefly discussed the existing City tree ordinance and possible amendments to be considered.

E. Old Business

1. Newman Crossing trailhead: Chair Gonsalves indicated that he had been in contact with the Seekonk Land Trust to begin engagement with the Town of Seekonk on creating the new trailhead with a small parking area (6-8 spaces) located on a City owned parcel (known as Newman Crossing) at the intersection of Route 152 and West Street in Seekonk, MA. The Commission will continue to discuss the proposal in the coming months.

F. Planning Department Update:

1. P. Hanner advised the Commission that the Department is developing a public outreach plan to ensure community involvement in updating the Comprehensive Community Plan.
2. W. Barnes indicated that he has been working with the City Fire Department to update the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2021.

Correspondence: None

Commission Member Items

- Chair Gonsalves noted that there was no word on appointments of W. Barnes and J. Carney to the Conservation Commission. He also noted that the City website does not accurately list member status. In addition, he stated that RIDEM had contacted the Ten Mile River Watershed Council concerning an effort to remove invasive plants, in particular water chestnut, from Central Pond. Also, the last open house of 2020 at the Hunt House was held on December 13.
- J. Boyd noted that the Commission will have to elect Officers (Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary) at the first meeting in 2021, and that the Commission's annual report for 2020 will need to be drafted, reviewed and approved so that it can be presented to the City Council and Mayor.

Adjournment - The Commission adjourned the meeting at 7:50 P.M.

The Conservation Commission will hold a regularly scheduled meeting online on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Meeting notice to follow.

Respectfully submitted,
James Boyd, Secretary