Conservation Commission Meeting Notes from 3/11/20

Members in Attendance: Steph Byrne, Cameron Frecker, Mary Lou Dopart, Alan McDonald, (Mike Morgillo & Laura Brogan could not attend).

Guests: James Kences (member of 100% Committee), Holly Silva (student at Great Bay Community College)

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 8th, 5pm @ York Library

House Keeping & Pursuing a Chapter

- At February’s meeting, members spoke about creating a chapter for the Conservation Commission. This would outline the exact responsibilities the commission has and the role it plays in the town decision process.
- We would like to get input on this process from other Conservation groups in the area who have gone through this process, Ogunquits Conservation Commission came to mind.
- Ideas were brought up that it would be beneficial if the York CC was able to meet with and have better communication with similar organizations in town. The basis of this being that there are many other organizations that focus on certain aspects of conservation. If these groups were able to collaborate on topics, it would make for a more conclusive and efficient process.

Town Comprehensive Plan

- Some members of the Commission attended the Planning Boards comprehensive plan meeting. At this meeting, different planning firms presented their strategy/plan to the board for the Town of York.
- Members who attended submitted their comments to the Planning Board.
- A town Climate Action Plan was also mentioned at this meeting, with future details to come.
- It was mentioned that it might be beneficial for a Conservation Commission member to also be a future member of the town Climate Change Board if possible.
- Further information about the Comprehensive plan can be found on the Planning Boards webpage.
- The Conservation Commission would like to stay connected to this process and will continually ask for updates from the Planning Board.
Town Owned Fields & Mowing Times

- During the commission's February meeting, the topic of field mowing was brought to attention. Recent research from various organizations state that mowing fields/meadows at certain times of the summer/fall season has diverse effects on the habitat.
- To promote native wildflowers and perennials, pollinators such as bees & butterflies, as well as create habitable nesting areas for birds, it is recommended that if a field needs to be mowed, it should occur at the end of the fall.
- Commission members had received articles pertaining to this topic. Some sources include The Wild Seed Project, Mass Audubon and Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.
- The Conservation Commission would like to reach out to York Land Trust and York Parks and Recreation Department to gather information regarding how they manage fields/meadows.
- A member of the commission will reach out to both YLT & YPR.

Town Pesticide Policy

- Members suggested reaching out to Sue Pike, who writes articles on wildlife topics in the York Weekly Newspaper. Possible collaboration on writing an article regarding how pesticides can affect wildlife.
- The Healthy Yards USA organization has been a great resource for the commission. We would like to reach out to them for further information regarding how to gain further community awareness about healthy yards. The idea of starting a Healthy Yards- York Facebook page was suggested.
- Along with potential articles in the local newspapers, the commission would like to explore the possibility of mailing newsletters to community members on general pesticide information.

Open Space Ordinance 7.6

- The Conservation Commission is currently working with the Planning Board regarding proposed amendments.
- The commission’s proposed amendments for the Open Space Ordinance have been given to Dylan Smith (Planning Director) and will be presented to the Planning Board at their April meeting.
- We have not received any more feedback regarding our amendments from other town officials.

Other

- The commission is gathering a list of similar organizations in York that focus on specific conservation topics. We would like to strengthen communication between these groups to coordinate on topics and work more efficiently.