

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

Special Meeting
Thursday, July 20, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
Room 315, Town Hall
45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT

This Special Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was set for Thursday, July 20, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 315 of Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT, for the purposes of conducting the Commission's business originally scheduled to be conducted at its Regular Meeting on July 13, which was not held due to lack of a quorum.

Present: Vice Chair Brad Sammis and Commissioners Dianne Lendler, Dianne Saunders, Colin Makepeace, James Pyskaty, and Jeffrey Borne, and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare.

Absent: Chair Mike Miller.

Also present were one person from the public and Mr. Scott Gray of the Trails Work Group.

Acting Chair Sammis called the Meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 8, 2023 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Saunders suggested these corrections:

- p. 3, at 3.A.1., paragraph 1, to rewrite sentences 2 and 3 as follows: "It is not easy to fill a 42-gallon bag with Cardamine impatiens before brushing back a trail. Invasives are taking over the trails, but not Mile-a-Minute weed."
- p. 3, 3.A.1, paragraph 2, to rewrite sentences 7 and 8 as: "As to litter, the idea is that people should pick up after themselves. Public Works will be called for dumping and do it and will send the person the bill."
- p. 3, 3.A.4., sentence 1 should read: "Commissioner Lendler complimented Scott Gray and the Trails Work Group volunteers in training who, along with her, completed the approved re-routing near point 48 on June 1st."
As to sentence 2, Mr. Scott Gray requested to state only: "They rehabbed the old section." and to delete "and installed cribbing for the new section and received training from Mr. Gray.", which was a correction acceptable to the Commissioners. The third sentence remains.
- p. 5, near the end of 3.C. Ferguson Woods, to change the last word "undergrowth" to "overgrowth" in this section: "- And the Purple Trail, which is overgrown. Commissioner Saunders said usually the Stewards do the Purple Trail twice a year due to overgrowth."
- p. 5, at 4.A.3., paragraph 1, to rewrite the last sentence as: "Commissioner Saunders said it is there because the Parks and Recreation Department may use it for the ropes course."
- p. 6, at 4.A.3., in paragraph 3, sentence 9, to delete "are available from" and to say "Commissioner Saunders stated that laminated signs were approved by the Law Department."

Motion was made by Commissioner Borne to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 8, 2023, with the corrections made tonight; seconded by Commissioner Lendler, and approved unanimously.

2. COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Ms. O'Hare informed the Commissioners that Commissioner Carl Arsenault had resigned recently. Commissioners recalled Carl's long service and input on many important matters.

3. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Stewards of Tyler Mill, Co-Chairs Monthly Report, D. Saunders & D. Lendler

Commissioner Saunders said that she and Commissioner Lendler and the Stewards are out there regularly, and a major part of the work has been done by the Trails Work Group. It is important to pull out invasives and then add native plants. A lot of multiflora rose is near the main road, which should be sprayed to diminish growth. Public Works will mow soon by Woodhouse Avenue and Maltby Lane and Tyler Mill Road and west to the Blue/Green Trail. If we let it go, it will overtake the Purple and Green Trails. *Commissioner Saunders will research how to address the blow-down area with different contractors.*

2. Boy Scout Trail - gate signage & brush-back, M. Miller

Mr. Scott Gray of the Trails Work Group reported tonight that the trail tread is being moved farther to the east by mountain bikers whom he asked to help establish the new tread closer to where it will be. Commissioner Lendler said she walked it this morning and the overhead work needs to be done. Ms. O'Hare said Chair Miller had told her that the overhead clearing will be done by the Trails Work Group. Commissioner Saunders brought up the annual horseback ride that is usually held in September, so this work needs to be completed by then.

3. Blue/Black Trail - re-route, installation, D. Lendler

Commissioner Lendler said she participated on this re-route with Scott Gray and others. It is done, and most of the tread cribbing was completed on the closed upper portion. Mr. Gray explained that the next cribbing will be put in below the closed section going down to the river. His plan is a) to hold back the erosion going down to the Muddy River and b) to allow hikers and horses to easily navigate it there. Commissioner Saunders said that is one of the primary horse crossings. Commissioner Makepeace said he is a horse rider, and he thinks the proposal is logical. *Commissioner Makepeace will look at it, and he asked Mr. Gray to talk to other horse riders about it as well. Commissioner Lendler will accompany Commissioner Makepeace and Scott Gray on a site visit to this spot.*

Ms. O'Hare passed around her photo of this area at the river's edge. Mr. Gray explained, From the edge of the water to these trees is about 15 feet. This is the spot where the trail is being cut off. So one piece of cedar for the upper crib at the base of these two trees; then about 5 feet down another, and the bottom one, all installed with rebar for stability. He suggested to cover the tops of the rebars. *The Commissioners' consensus was that Scott Gray and Commissioner Makepeace will go out and decide where the cribbing will be installed, and the Trails Work Group can install it.* Ms. O'Hare indicated this modification will need to be approved by Kenny Michaels.

4. Contracted Work, D. Saunders

Commissioner Saunders said: We worked to remove Japanese knotweed with contractor Bob Baker at the entrance to Tyler Mill, and we cut canes across the river, which are left to dry now for Public Works to remove. Contractor Todd Mervosh will treat the regrowth of the knotweed soon. *Ms. O'Hare will follow up per contract.*

Ms. O'Hare reported on the contract with Anthony Zemba, who completed a study of the deadwood swamp at Tyler Mill Preserve.

5. Other Reports

All Commissioners received Mr. Scott Gray's "Wallingford Trails Work Group Report for 7/20/23", wherein he summarized the Group's work since the last Commission Meeting on June 8th. As to the "Trail Closed" sign for the Red Floodplain Trail that was recently stolen, no new sign has been installed, and the Commissioners agreed for now.

Commissioner Lendler highlighted completed tasks and commended all 13 persons (Stewards and mountain bikers) who worked together at Tyler Mill Preserve yesterday maintaining trails by cutting back.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Mowing - status

Ms. O'Hare said this mowing has not been done yet.

2. Contracted Work, staff

Ms. O'Hare reported that Bob Baker is removing Japanese knotweed from the field by Rosick Lane and also north of the old parking lot. As these areas regrow, Todd Mervosh will spray there. Commissioner Saunders said that Public Works' mowing of the Butterfly Meadow looks great—butterflies are there. *Ms. O'Hare will request Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis to mow the Butterfly Meadow and the field across from it (Schoolhouse/Cheshire Road) at the end of August.*

C. Ferguson Woods

1. Japanese knotweed removal project - chemical or mechanical

Ms. O'Hare reported that former Chair Mary Heffernon's pool tarp out there worked well to smother the Japanese knotweed, except that the invasives are now growing beyond the tarp. *Commissioners tonight authorized Ms. O'Hare to contract with Todd Mervosh to use chemical treatment on the Japanese knotweed here.*

2. Re-blazing to eliminate 'piggy-backing' - status of work

Mr. Gray reported re-blazing to eliminate the 'piggy-backing' has been taken care of here by the Trails Work Group.

3. Proposed kiosk - location, design, cost of materials, revised map - Scott Gray & staff

Mr. Gray submitted and described the schematic and cost analysis for a kiosk at Ferguson Woods, which he proposed. The Trails Work Group will make and install the kiosk. He gave a cost estimate. Ms. O'Hare noted that Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels needs to see this design. *Ms. O'Hare and Rob Baltramaitis, Director of Public Works, will finalize a location for the kiosk and then inform Mr. Gray.*

Motion was made by Commissioner Borne to approve construction of a kiosk for Ferguson Woods per the design shown by Scott Gray, as revised to use Lexan instead of Plexiglas, at a cost not to exceed \$500, which is to be funded by the Commission; seconded by Commissioners Pyskaty and Makepeace, and approved unanimously.

Note: See discussion about Ferguson Woods under item H. Trails Work Group.

4. Proposal for bogbridge - revised location, IWWC permitting, design & cost of materials - Scott Gray & C. Makepeace

Mr. Gray said he flagged a revised location/reroute to move the trail north and off private property near the wetland. The proposed wetland crossing would be by the remnant of a low stone wall about 50 yards from the existing trail. *Commissioner Makepeace and Scott Gray will look at the proposed bogbridge location/reroute and will bring a plan to the August meeting.* Ms. O'Hare stated that this project will need a Wetlands Permit, and the deadline to file a permit request is July 25 for the July 26 Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission Meeting. If filed, then Mr. Gray and Commissioner Makepeace would present the IWWC Application to the IWWC on September 6 for approval.

Notes: The gentleman in the public left the meeting at 7:27 p.m. Also, Item D. Fresh Meadows is deleted here because it was taken up as Item 3.B. above.

E. Bertini Park

1. Proposal regarding correction of various trail issues, C. Makepeace

Commissioner Makepeace will complete trail proposals for Bertini Park to the August 10 Commission meeting for discussion.

F. Beseck Mountain

1. Contracted work, staff

Ms. O'Hare reported that Mr. Robert Pagini has been contracted to do a description of Beseck Mountain for a brochure and future kiosk. He will report on the portion of a National Scenic Trail there and on the various habitats. Ms. O'Hare showed on the property map the access to the trail located between 45 and 47 Cliffside Trail. Trees of Heaven by the trail were treated already, *and Ms. O'Hare will inspect them for the August Meeting.* She said weeds grow along the access trail, which runs to the traprock ridge. The main trail comes out near Route 68. Ms. O'Hare noted 89 people walked the Trail for the Celebrate Open Space Event a decade ago.

2. Discuss proposal for kiosk, staff

Ms. O'Hare proposed to put a kiosk at the Cliffside Trail entrance. Mr. Gray stated this trail is in bad shape. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

G. Wharton Brook/Doolittle Park

1. Proposal for contracted work (Wharton Brook floodplain)

Ms. O'Hare described her idea for brochure content describing the floodplain, to be created by Mary Mushinsky's Quinnipiac Advocates Group for distribution as a brochure and also for a future kiosk at Wharton Brook Park/Doolittle Park.

Motion was made by Commissioner Borne that Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare should

contract with Quinnipiac Advocates Group to prepare content for a brochure describing the floodplain at Doolittle Park by Wall Street at a cost not to exceed \$750; seconded by Commissioner Makepeace, and approved unanimously.

2. Discuss proposal for kiosk, staff

The Commissioners were in general agreement to do kiosks here. *Commissioner Lendler will get a contractor's quote for a kiosk.* Further discussion was tabled to the August 10 Regular Meeting.

H. Trails Work Group - Mayoral Mission Statement

The Commissioners tonight received a copy of the "Trails Work Group Mission Statement" by William W. Dickinson, Jr., Mayor, dated 6/29/23, that had been forwarded to Chair Mike Miller, Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels, and Ms. O'Hare. Ms. O'Hare showed photos she took at Ferguson Woods and said the first 100 feet of trail needs to be cut back. Mr. Gray noted that the homestead area there is practically impassable. Prior, the Conservation Commission used to rent a flail machine to do this work. Mr. Gray read that the Mayor's Mission Statement limits the Trails Work Group to not use power tools/equipment for trail maintenance work. One suggestion was made that the Trails Work Group should be issued power tools for their work, like a gas weed whacker and a powered hedge trimmer. Mr. Gray will discuss further with Mr. Michaels.

The Commissioners directed staff to send a proposal to Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels to have the Trails Work Group brush back the trail system at Ferguson Woods.

I. Other Properties - None.

4. PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP - Monitoring Reports

A. Fresh Meadows, J. Borne.

Commissioner Borne will report next time.

Mr. Gray left the meeting at this time.

B. Beseck Mountain - stewardship assignment.

Commissioner Makepeace accepted the stewardship assignment and will report on Beseck Mountain at the September Commission Meeting.

C. Marcus Cooke Park - stewardship assignment

This responsibility was not assigned.

5. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Field Monitoring Reports

Commissioner Saunders described an area that needs to be mowed on Field 4B. Also, she has seen graffiti on the structure. *Ms. O'Hare will inform Director of Parks and Recreation Kenny Michaels about this graffiti.*

Reports: Commissioner Saunders said that Fields 1A and 1C and 4C are in fine condition. Field 4A is not mowed, and water access for cattle is limited. Fields 5A and 7A are fallow. *Field 19A is unworkable and to be reconsidered by the Farmland Lease Committee relative to lease requirements and use for the August Meeting.* The Field 8B gate is O.K., and this field is in hay. Field 1B is in hay, and

Fields 2A and 2B are in hay. *Commissioner Saunders noted that Chair Miller will report on Bozzuto's 11 fields.*

Fields previously stewarded by Commissioner Carl Arsenault will need to be assessed.

B. Field 2A - trespass issue, D. Saunders

There is evidence of trespass by someone driving through this Field 2A at the back. *Commissioners Saunders and Makepeace will look at it.*

6. PURCHASED SERVICES - Natural Resources FY 23-24

A. Invasive plant species eradication - several properties

The Commissioners asked Ms. O'Hare to have Eric Hansen, Anthony Zemba, or another vendor to quote on conservation management area evaluations on several fields.

B. Wharton Brook floodplain information signage/brochure

Refer to Motion made at 3.G.1. above.

C. Other

Ms. O'Hare said she is concerned about the status of conservation management on Field 20A.

Motion by Commissioner Pyskaty to request a quote regarding Farmland Lease Field 20A to evaluate the Conservation Management Areas on there; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.

Ms. O'Hare is to follow up.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION - pursuant to General Statutes Sect. 1-200(6)(D) with respect to discussion of the purchase of real estate

Motion by Commissioner Borne to go into Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner Makepeace, and approved unanimously.

The Recording Secretary left the room at this time, 8:44 p.m.

The Recording Secretary was asked to return to the room at 9:01 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Pyskaty to exit Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner Lendler, and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Borne will complete a report.

8. REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

A. 264 Williams Road - conservation easement & status

This discussion was tabled to the August 10 agenda.

9. NEXT MEETING - August 10, 2023

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Pyskaty to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Makepeace, and approved unanimously.

The Meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary