

**WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION****REGULAR MEETING**

**Room 315, Town Hall  
45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT**

**Thursday, October 12, 2023, 6:00 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

*[Minutes scheduled to be considered and approved at the next meeting, Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>]*

**Present:** Chair Mike Miller, Vice Chair Brad Sammis, Jeff Borne, Dianne Saunders, Jim Pyskaty, Eric Severson, and Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner

**Absent:** Dianne Lendler and Conor Makepeace

Chair Miller called the Meeting to order at 6:15 p.m..

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES****A. Regular Meeting, Sept. 14, 2023**

Page 3, '10. Other reports': Chair Miller suggested deletion of the first paragraph and all agreed.

**MOTION:** J. Pyskaty to approve the Minutes as corrected.

**SECOND:** J. Borne

**VOTE:** All in favor except Commissioners Saunders and Severson abstained as they had not been present

**2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT****A. Tyler Mill Preserve**

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

Commissioner Saunders reported the Stewards continue the work on invasive plant eradication. She described her recent siting on Northford Road (toward Anderson Rd.) of a vigorous invasive vine called porcelain berry and cautioned all should be on the look-out for it. It has exceedingly rough, long roots and chemicals are only means of effective eradication. Ms. O'Hare suggested placing a large poster board with the vine's photo in Town Hall would help spread the word. *Commissioner Saunders will do so.*

2. Daily Permit Hunting - season opening, Oct. 21

Ms. O'Hare explained this item is on the agenda to spread awareness in Town about the small game hunting activity in the evermore popular Preserve. Commissioner Saunders reported the Stewards assist DEEP every year by installing, maintaining, replacing, and

trimming around DEEP signage: "*Permit Required*" (yellow signs) placed along preserve roads and in Vietnam Veterans Memorial park; and "*No Hunting In This Area*" (red signs) – which in the first year involved posting 80 signs. She reports this work to Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks & Recreation, annually, when the work has been completed.

3. Closure of unpermitted trail on Morris Rock - status of maintenance work  
Chair Miller stated since Commissioner Lendler is not here perhaps Scott Gray, in the audience, knew the status of this Trails Work Group assignment. Mr. Gray indicated the work has not been done yet.

4. Eradication of invasive plants - contract work, D. Saunders

a. Vegetation clearing

Commissioner Saunders reported that she, and Stewards Larry Stowe and David Bedell, and Contractor, Bob Baker, have been clearing invasive plants in the vicinity of the closed bridge.

She reported Mr. Bedell just found the first known occurrence of swallowwort, a highly invasive vine, in TMP - a single plant - and all should be on the look-out for others.

b. Japanese knotweed

Commissioner Saunders said this treatment was completed in late September by All Habitat Services, LLC, near the parking area in the vicinity of Tyler Mill Rd./Northford Rd., in 'islands' in the Muddy River, and at a few other spots, as this work could not wait until next season

c. Trees of Heaven

Commissioner Saunders reported that Mr. Bedell and Mr. Baker and she also cleared around the Trees of Heaven (treated last fall) and asked Ms. O'Hare to try and get a contract out to All Habitat Services for a second treatment which must be done by Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>; the alternate, would be to do next August.

5. Mapping, staff

Ms. O'Hare reported the updating of the TMP map - which is completed every so often to keep things current – is underway. Chair Miller called on Mr. Gray who passed out a report prepared for the Meeting which listed approved trail changes that should be on the revised map. Ms. O'Hare said some are already on the draft map and the rest will be put on the map as soon as it is affirmed the particular changes have been completed e.g. removal of blazes on trees for Red Trail in floodplain – (see below for status of others).

6. Removal of Interpretive Trail – status of approved work

Mr. Gray indicated that the removal of any remaining id. number signs from trees on the defunct Interpretive Trail has not yet been done. Ms. O'Hare said map references are gone and the booklet was removed from the wall.

7. Kiosk by closed bridge - discussion of location & wetlands permitting

The Commission had consensus on best location would be behind the guardrail just off the west side of Tyler Mill Rd. between the bridge and the parking lot. Mr. Gray will flag

the spot and will also move the required IWWC application forward. Commissioner Saunders indicated she wanted a note for the file that, *"This vicinity is of archeological and/or historical value"*. Ms. O'Hare will follow-up on that note.

8. Extension of Pink Trail by installation of blazing on existing unnamed trail - status of approved work

Mr. Gray told the Commission the work was not done yet.

9. Mowing equipment

[Tabled]

10. Other reports

Ms. O'Hare reported resident Roman Mrozinski notified her office of two missing wooden planks on the wide trail bridge over the Muddy River and a hazard tree near it. He reported both to the Dept. of Public Works (DPW) as well. Commissioner Saunders had reported the tree a while ago. *She will email Kenny Michaels about the needed bridge repair work and he will determine if it's a DPW job or a Trails Work Group item.*

**B. Fresh Meadows**

1. Mowing – status

It was agreed Ms. O'Hare will ask DPW to mow in November after the bird and dragonfly migrations.

2. Eradication of invasive plants - contract work, staff

a. Japanese knotweed

Ms. O'Hare reported the knotweed – four circular areas in the southern field & four clumps of plants in the northern field – were treated by All Habitat Services, LLC last month.

b. Trees of Heaven

*Ms. O'Hare will follow-up with All Habitat Services about if the Trees of Heaven will need a second treatment.* She had asked them before to assess when they were at this property treating the knotweed.

3. Tessa's Trail – maintenance

The 'brushing back' of the trail may be done by Mr. Reddy - who lives nearby - or by the Trails Work Group. *Chair Miller will follow-up.*

**C. Ferguson Woods**

1. Re-blazing to eliminate 'piggy-backing' – status of approved work

Mr. Gray said the TWG has completed this blazing work. *Ms. O'Hare will get the map updated accordingly.*

2. Proposal submitted to Parks & Recreation Director by S. Gray for kiosk – location, design, cost of materials, revised map – status

This item awaits DPW approval of the kiosk location on cul-de-sac and Mayoral approval of the expenses. *Ms. O'Hare will pursue both.*

3. Proposal submitted to Parks & Recreation Director for re-routing portion of trail off private property with associated relocation of proposed bog-bridge – status of permitting, Director’s approval & work

Ms. O’Hare reported the IWWC approved the application at its Oct. 4 meeting. Mr. Gray said Mr. Michaels has approved the installation of the new trail portion with blazing and removal of blazes where may be necessary.

#### **D. Bertini Park**

1. Proposal submitted to Parks & Recreation Director by C. Makepeace regarding correction of various trail issues – status of Director’s approval & work  
Mr. Michaels had verbally approved these proposals for Bertini Park. *Ms. O’Hare will get the TMP map changed to reflect the approved corrections and will obtain in-house approval of sign language and then procure signage.* The signage is to be installed by TWG.

#### **E. Beseck Mountain**

1. Field report - C. Makepeace & E. Severson

[Tabled]

2. Contracted work, staff

Ms. O’Hare passed around a copy of the narrative completed by contractor Bob Pagini on the rich natural resource, Beseck Mountain, along with beautiful photos and a copy of the book he co-authored, *Traprock Ridges of New England*. This contracted work forms the basis for information to be used in a future kiosk, signage, and/or for promotional materials.

3. Proposal for kiosk

Suitable location was discussed again.

4. Cliffside Trail – maintenance, staff

Chair Miller reported that this trail up the traprock face is maintained by CFPA ‘as a spur’. The consensus was the condition of this trail is acceptable. In response to concern about the beginning portion of the trail being undefined, Ms. O’Hare relayed how the wooden posts the DPW had installed on the south side of Cliffside Trail about seven years ago to demarcate the boundary between Town and private property border had been since been removed.

*Chair Miller will assess current condition of both the lower portion of Cliffside Trail and the main Town sign by Cliffside Drive.*

5. National Scenic Trail signage – status

*Chair Miller will contact CFPA regarding getting official NST signage for the Town property and for trail access at the Rte. 68 R.O.W., as well.*

6. Trail signage (Town property boundaries) – status

*Ms. O'Hare will follow-up on the fabrication of previously approved signage the trail at borders.*

**F. Wharton Brook/Doolittle Park**

1. Proposed kiosk location, staff

[Tabled]

**G. Wallace Dam, Quinnipiac River**

1. Tree maintenance work – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare reported on the tree and shrub removal work underway on both sides of the Wallace dam which received IWWC approval as 'maintenance activity' on Oct. 4. The dam was acquired by the Town ten years ago after the fishway was installed on the Quinnipiac River's western bank. The DEEP requires a dam inspection report every ten years. The dam inspection report submitted to the Engineering Dept. indicated this site work within 25 feet of the dam facility was necessary to protect against structural damage from tree roots and damage, or flow diversion, from falling trees and branches.

**3. PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP & MONITORING REPORTS**

**A. Marcus Cooke Memorial Park, E. Severson**

Commissioner Severson said the trails could use re-blazing. *Commissioner Saunders will e-mail him the property monitoring form.*

Ms. O'Hare reported the Engineering Dept. was unable to locate the trails map it had completed a few years ago and we need a trails map.

**B. Reports for November Meeting:** Cooke Rd. (#5A), D. Saunders; Whirlwind Hill/Scard Rd. & 1254 Whirlwind Hill Rd., D. Lendler; 205 Main St., Yalesville, B. Sammis; Wharton Brook/Doolittle Park, staff

Chair Miller reminded these reports are due at the next meeting, Nov.9.

**4. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM**

**A. Field 20A - Contractual work proposal, staff**

Ms. O'Hare reported she obtained one quote for this work on site conditions but as it is over \$750, two more quotes are needed. *She will follow-up.*

**B. Farmland Lease Committee**

1. Committee Meeting, Oct. 12, 5:00 p.m.

Committee Chair Saunders gave a brief report of the meeting of the Committee which is comprised of herself, Commissioner. Sammis, and Chair Miller. More Committee members would be helpful to monitor the 36 fields and act as lessee liaisons. *The Committee will meet again on Oct. 18, at 5:00 p.m. to prepare for bidding of 20 leases.*

2. Field Monitoring Reports

Committee Chair Saunders gave her monitoring report on her assigned fields noting how the degree of rainfall has impacted farming, e.g. Field #5A, Cooke Road, was too wet for the lessee to mow.

Regarding the following three agenda items, Committee Chair Saunders said this work is in progress with lease compliance under review.

3. Revisions to 'General & Field Specific Restrictions/Requirements'
4. Recommended 5-year lease extensions
5. Draft proposals for fall bids

#### **5. PURCHASED SERVICES - NATURAL RESOURCES FY 23-24**

##### **A. Invasive plant species eradication – several properties**

Commissioner Saunders spoke of more contracted work needs to be done this fiscal year.

##### **B. Wharton Brook floodplain informational signage/brochure** [Tabled]

##### **C. Other – not discussed**

#### **6. MEMBERSHIP ANNUAL FEES**

- A. CFPA - membership dues
- B. CT Butterfly Association - membership dues
- C. CT Land Conservation Council - membership dues
- D. CACIWC - membership dues

**MOTION: J. Pyskaty to approve the payment of all of the above membership dues.**

**SECOND: J. Borne**

**VOTE: Unanimous**

#### **7. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE**

- A. 138 Williams Road property – Town Council Meeting, Sept. 26 , Agreement & DEEP grant application, submitted by Water Division, Oct. 2 - Chair Miller & J. Borne

Chair Miller and Commissioner Borne had attended the Sept. 26 Town Council Meeting and reported on their remarks given to the Council during its consideration of the purchase agreement with the Halls for acquisition of this 40-acre property by the Water Division. Commissioner Borne said they had both walked the land with the Mayor and others and noted the upland areas in cultivation and the natural beauty along the Muddy River. Ms. O'Hare reported the Water Division submitted its Open Space & Watershed Lands Acquisition Grant application regarding reimbursement for this property to DEEP on Oct. 2 and passed around a copy of the application she obtained today.

- B. Trails Work Group –TWG information not discussed above, D. Lendler

Chair Miller noted copies of the 'Trails Work Group Report', dated 10/12/23, had been given out to all earlier tonight by Mr. Gray. As Commissioner Lendler was not here tonight - and as Mr. Gray had by this time left the Meeting - it would not be taken up for further discussion.

- C. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program: SCRCOG's "Climate Planning Stakeholder Workshop", Aug. 29 – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare reported this program initiative involves funding from the federal government to the State and the Councils of Government to support reduction in greenhouse gases through implementation of discrete projects at the local level such as canopied parking lots, new public cooling centers, street trees, etc. – even the acquisition of open space. The Town and other agencies may wish to apply for grants beginning in April 2024 she said.

Commissioner Borne suggested trees by rivers and streets for shade and temperature moderation. Commissioner Saunders noted there are also Urban Forestry grants available for street tree planting.

- D. CFPA correspondence, email, dated 8/11/23, re: foundation document  
[Tabled]
- E. CIRCA factsheet – Conservation Commissions & climate change/resiliency  
[Tabled]
- F. CT Butterfly Association, newsletter. Summer 2023 – was displayed
- G. CFPA - magazine, *CT Woodlands*, Fall 2023 – was displayed

Commissioner Saunders noted the CACTWC conference e-mail she had received just today and encouraged all to attend. *She will e-mail to all.* Ms. O'Hare said registration fees for Commissioners would be reimbursed upon submittal to her office.

**8. NEXT MEETING** – Nov. 9, 2023

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

Consensus was made to adjourn. The Meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner  
Acting Recording Secretary