



DRAFT

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

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

Thursday, July 11, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Chair Mike Miller, Vice Chair Conor Makepeace, and Commissioners Jeff Borne, Dianne Saunders, Erik Severson, Bruce Conroy, Jim Pyskaty, and Dianne Lendler, and Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner

Absent: None

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 8/15/24
AT 9:45 a.m. AND RECEIVED BY
Kristen Sango TOWN CLERK

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: B. Conroy, To accept the Minutes of Regular Meeting, June 13, 2024 as presented.

SECOND: J. Borne

VOTE: Unanimous

2. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Chair Miller announced that he is stepping down from the Chairmanship due to job responsibilities and life changes but will stay on as a Commissioner and as a member of the Farmland Lease Committee. Vice Chair Makepeace agreed to become Acting Chairman starting after tonight's Meeting. Next month elections will be held for the positions of new Chairman and new Vice Chairman.

3. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Fresh Meadows

1. Kiosk content & map

Scott Gray, Trails Work Group Coordinator, indicated he will shorten the height of the kiosk, refurbish it, and replace the plexiglass.

2. Graffiti, two areas – status

Chair Miller indicated he has not addressed this work.

3. Butterfly Loop Trail & Pond Trail

a. Mowing at key spots

Ms. O'Hare stated she has not yet notified the DPW.

b. Work project to restore 5-foot width

Ms. O'Hare stated she has not yet conferred with Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks & Rec or and the DPW about how best to accomplish the work, and had been planning on doing so at the Mayor's Open Space Managers Meeting, but will follow-up.

4. Glacial erratic signage –

Ms. O'Hare stated she will follow-up on ordering the replacement sign which the Open Space Resources Management Fund will cover.

5. Dead tree on erratic boulder

Mr. Gray indicated this work is half-done and the cut tree parts are up against boulder.

6. Eradication work

Ms. O'Hare indicated All Habitat Services, Inc. was contracted to complete the work by June 30 but it needs to be checked prior to payment.

B. Ferguson Woods

1. Trails maintenance

Mr. Gray indicated brushing back the trails, constructing the approved trail re-route, and fabricating and installing the footbridge and the kiosk will be done this summer.

2. Eradication work

Ms. O'Hare stated that All Habitat Services, Inc. was contracted to complete the work by June 30. Commissioner Saunders said their work seemed satisfactory but added tarps should not be used in future as they are not efficacious as plants spread under and up at edges of tarp and now tarp has disintegrated into pieces which will need to be removed.

C. Bat box installations

Ms. O'Hare stated it is difficult to find a contractor to do this kind of work.

D. Mayoral Open Space Management Meeting – date tbd

Ms. O'Hare reported no date has been set.

E. Other Property issues

None reported.

3. PROPERTY MONITORING REPORTS

A. Ferguson Woods, J. Pyskaty

Commissioner Pyskaty presented his report: no blow-downs, pristine trails where there is tree canopy, name sign edges are rotting. *Ms. O'Hare will pursue sign repair with original fabricator, New England Sign Carvers.*

B. Bertini Park, C. Makepeace

Vice Chair Makepeace reported trails were fine except for a minor blow-down on the Blue Trail and there is a strange pole/log/ pyramid object at the entrance to the trails

located about 100 feet off the parking area which has unsafe due to nails and sharp pieces, etc. and should be removed. Consensus was for it to be removed unless there is a reason for it there. *Ms. O'Hare was directed to inform Mr. Michaels after she receives photos of it.* Mr. Gray will address blow-down.

C. Beseck Mountain & Cliffside Drive Trail, C. Makepeace

Vice Chair Makepeace reported that the trail entrance off Cliffside Drive is terrible condition with mugwort and overgrowth and requires maintenance.

Mr. Gray declined to maintain the Cliffside Trail as a Trails Work Group task as he feels the trail is a liability. Vice Chair Makepeace stated the trail should be restored and the first part of the trail should be improved to look like an actual trail. Chair Miller indicated in the past he had encountered a CFPA Trail Maintenance person conducting maintenance on the steep portion of this trail. *Ms. O'Hare was directed to send request for maintenance to Mr. Michaels.*

Commissioner Conroy recommended that the Engineering Department re-install the boundary markers through the entrance area under discussion. *Ms. O'Hare will follow-up.*

D. Beseck Meadow, M. Miller

Chair Miller indicated he would report next month.

E. 205 Main Street, Yalesville, B. Conroy

Commissioner Conroy indicated he would report next month.

4. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee - D. Saunders, Chair

1. Committee Meeting, Basement Conference Room, July 18, 5:00 p.m.

[Postponed]

Committee Chair Saunders re-set meeting now to be held July 31, 5:00 p.m. same location. *Ms. O'Hare will follow-up regarding a request to determine how much notice is required relative to a change in lease contract by a lessee.*

2. Field 14A – field mowing & perimeter mowing encroachment, re-bid

Ms. O'Hare reported this matter is on her suggested agenda for the future Mayor's Open Space Manager's Meeting so she therefore has no new information to relay. Committee Chair Saunders stated a field should really only go one year without cutting.

5. PROFESSIONAL NATURAL RESOURCES SERVICES

A. RFQ – Eradication of invasive plants on three Town properties

Ms. O'Hare reiterated ALL Habitat Services was awarded the contract to complete all the work by June 30 and no invoice has been received yet.

B. RFQ – GPS trails and features in TMP

Ms. O'Hare has not sent RFQ to Purchasing Dept. yet.

6. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT – TYLER MILL PRESERVE

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

Lendler

Co-Chair Saunders gave report including new graffiti on Tyler Mill raceway blocks which she reported to Mr. Michaels to give to Police. She then described in detail the method she has developed from researching management methods for maintenance of natural trails used by of US Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, CIPWIG, and CAES that the Stewards have employed for years particularly on the Red North Trail, Red South Trail and Pink Trail North due to the native plants growing alongside the trail beds there. She reported trail maintenance work had been conducted on these trails which should not have been. She described the adverse impacts of not using this method. *She will forward the protocols used for this method by email to members.* She wants Stewards to have responsibility for these three trails and for the floodplain areas and for the main entrance area off Northford Road.

Mr. Gray stated that work discussed had not been conducted by the TWG.

Commissioner Conroy called for Mr. Gray to notify him of scheduled Trails Work Group work times.

The challenges involved in sharing maintenance equipment were discussed.

MOTION: **B. Conroy, To recommend that Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks & Recreation Department, properly supply the Trails Work Group with the necessary equipment to proceed with the work and a place to store it.**

SECOND: **C. Makepeace**

VOTE: **J. Borne abstained. All other Commissioners voted 'Yes'.**

B. Trailside management protocols

Discussed above.

C. Eradication work

[Noted: error, two item "C"s, this one and below] Commissioner Saunders reported on the work that she observed to be was done. *She will check for completeness of remaining work areas and advise Ms. O'Hare accordingly.*

C. Foraging activities – status

Commissioner Conroy stated the foraging class leader tells attendees not to pick native plants and this should be reinforced through Commissioner participation in these events.

D. DEEP CT Recreational Trails Grant Program – Preserve plan grant, D.

Saunders

Commissioner Saunders indicated she is progressing with the draft proposal and listed the five main goals of the Management Plan:

- future public water supply watershed,
- types and levels of recreational use,
- infrastructure status (roads, pipes, etc.),
- emergency plan (including forest fire risk), and
- climate change impacts.

She noted that the CLCC offers grants to land trusts regarding climate change impacts to

open space areas.

Ms. O'Hare was requested to contact State Representative Mary Mushinsky regarding her sample ordinance relative to illegal trail construction activities and relative to plant foraging and do they have fines. Signage would be needed once ordinances were in effect.

E. DEEP Forestry consultation, D. Saunders

Commissioner Saunders stated she completed a Draft form. *Ms. O'Hare will review and then Commissioner Saunders will submit on the Town's behalf.*

F. "Black Diamond" - new unauthorized ravine trail – status

Regarding the dangerous unauthorized trail known as "High Meadow Trail", a "Black Diamond Trail" posted on the TrailForks website, Ms. O'Hare reported that there has been no action taken by the Town subsequent to the May 30 site investigation by Kenny Michael, Director, Parks & Recreation Dept., Kurt Treiber, Risk Manager, Commissioner Saunders, and herself.

Ms. O'Hare was requested to ascertain from Risk Manager if Town's liability differs for claims made occurring on official trails verses claims made occurring on unauthorized trails.

Ms. O'Hare was requested to ascertain from Law Dept. the definition of "trail".

7. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Trails Work Group – TWG information/matters not discussed above, D. Lendler
Mr. Gray submitted copies of his TWG Report.

B. Open Space Users Group Meeting, Parks & Recreation Dept. – meeting date tbd – No date yet.

C. South Central Regional Council of Governments - Regional trail connections, staff

Ms. O'Hare reported that Town Planner Kevin Pagini had attended a SCRCOG meeting where planning for inter-town trail connections was discussed.

D. CFPA magazine, Woodlands

8. NEXT MEETING – Aug. 8, 2024

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Miller adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner
Acting Recording Secretary

Individuals in need of auxiliary aids for the effective communication in programs and services of the Town of Wallingford are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance Coordinator at 203-294-2070 five days prior.