

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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

Thursday, August 14, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

NOTE: Italicized text below denotes a member "action item".

Present: Chair Conor Makepeace, Dianne Saunders, Mike Miller, Jim Loughlin, and Jim Pyskaty, and Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner

Absent: Vice Chair Bruce Conroy and Commissioners Jeff Borne and Erik Severson

Chair Makepeace convened the Meeting at 6:05 p.m..

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting, June 12, 2025

Chair Makepeace noted that he had been contacted by a member of the public who formally stated his objection to a certain item in the posted Minutes and requested to add to the Minutes. The Chair stated the Commission is not going to change the record regarding items that were discussed.

MOTION: M. Miller, To approve Minutes with the Addendum as presented

SECOND: J. Loughlin

VOTE: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Outstanding Task List (excel sheet), C. Makepeace
Commissioners and staff reported on task status.

B. 205 Main Street
Taken up below under item D.3.

C. Beseck Mountain / Cliffside Trail

1. Engineering Dept. survey work

Ms. O'Hare reported she observed the survey staking on the lower portion of Cliffside Trail preparatory to ordering fencing and removing three dead trees. As a portion of the trail veers off the Town land this short section will need to be re-routed once definitive survey information can be completed for the re-route. *She will obtain a digital record of the survey if available and give it to the Chair for this area as requested.*

2. Vegetative management – contract work

Ms. O'Hare reported contractor completed work with aid from Commissioner Saunders. Three dead trees will need to be removed and a few bittersweet vines growing into tree canopies.

D. Beseck Meadow

1. Vegetation removal

Ms. O'Hare indicated Department of Public Works will clear the entranceway but not remove the bamboo so she can retain a contractor to do the work with waste taken offsite and disposed of properly.

2. Signage

Ms. O'Hare indicated the fabricated sign will be installed very shortly.

E. Other property issues

Nothing to report.

3. PROPERTY MONITORING REPORTS

A. Beseck Meadow, M. Miller

Commissioner Miller will give report next month.

B. Ferguson Woods, J. Pyskaty

Commissioner Pyskaty reported all looked good including the recently installed bogbridge.

C. 1254 Whirlwind Hill Rd., J. Loughlin

Commissioner Loughlin indicated he had nothing to report.

D. 205 Main Street, Yalesville, B. Conroy

Commissioner Conroy indicated he had submitted his report in June.

E. Marcus Cooke Park, E Severson

Chair Makepeace reported he blazed the Yellow Loop Trail and that he and Commissioner Severson installed two "Limit of Town Land" signs on trees where the trail leaves Town land. Work has not started on correcting the three trails that are Red Trails. *Commissioner Severson will give his report next month.*

4. ORDINANCE PROPOSALS – Sept. Ordinance Committee Meeting

A. Metal detecting activities

B. Foraging activities

C. Other

Items A, B and C, above, were discussed and Chair Makepeace asked for any suggestions. Commissioner Saunders would like to see the ordinance about open spaces and parks closing at dusk revised to closing at sunset. *Ms. O'Hare will reach out to State Rep. Mushinsky for the ordinance language she had on prohibition of trail construction and tree cutting in State forests.* Commissioner Borne indicated the Town of Branford won a legal case pertaining to modification of public properties involving stone walls.

Members are to forward any additional proposals to Chair Makepeace by Friday, Aug. 22. Chair Makepeace will combine them and forward to Law Dept. as requested.

MOTION: M. Miller, For Chair Makepeace to forward the suggested ordinances to Law Department and then present them at Ordinance Committee Meeting.

SECOND: J. Loughlin

VOTE: Unanimous

5. PROFESSIONAL NATURAL RESOURCES SERVICES

A. Invasive plant mechanical removal work

Commissioner Saunders identified several areas where chemical and mechanical eradication by a contractor is needed.

B. Muddy River stream crossing removal – status

Ms. O'Hare reported the removal work was completed by June 30 by the contractor.

C. Other contract proposals

6. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee

1. Monitoring Reports

reported summer monitoring has begun and said that the gate on Field 8B was damaged and must be replaced. Ms. O'Hare reported there is no functional gate at the access lane off Anderson Road to Fields 7B, 7C, and 7D. *Together they will address these matters.*

Ms. O'Hare remarked that the Commission needs to plan for a decrease in interest in leasing Town land that will accompany the forecasted decrease in active local farming. Committee Chair Saunders suggested one idea is ten-year rather than the current five-year lease terms.

B. Access gate locks – report

Ms. O'Hare reported Commissioner Saunders assisted with a locked gate issue at Field 3A. *Together they will revisit the system in place for locking all farm gates in the Program as lessees change, locks are switched out over time, and the Town needs free access at all times.*

C. Proposed bids

Ms. O'Hare will do.

7. PUBLIC OUTREACH

Commissioner Saunders suggested a lecture program on making backyard meadows to help pollinators. Ms. O'Hare suggested a program to honor the Town's traprock ridges.

Chair Makepeace would like the Commission to have a presence on Facebook - previously agreed to by the Mayor. *He will pursue creating that working with the Town social media staff person.*

8. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT – TYLER MILL PRESERVE

A. Stewards of Tyler Mill, Monthly Report, D. Saunders

Commissioner Saunders will email her report. She submitted the list of equipment the Stewards use, as requested.

B. Five existing footbridges seeking IWWC permitting – proposed by Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks & Recreation – discussion, staff

Ms. O'Hare indicated Kenny Michaels, Parks & Recreation Director, had requested her assistance in obtaining retroactive IWWC permitting for five footbridges. She sent a memo to Mr. Michaels, dated Aug. 13, (with photos) copied to the Commission, reporting that two already had permitting, identifying several other footbridges installed on Official Trails that require permitting, and advising him that other site conditions need to be addressed - the most pressing being the eroded road conditions on (Closed) Maltby Lane causing erosion on (Closed) Tyler Mill Road.

Chair Makepeace explained this request by Mr. Michaels had stemmed from a site investigation that Mr. Michaels, Scott Grey, and he had conducted in April regarding a proposed trail wherein Chair Makepeace had remarked on the lack of wetlands permitting for trail improvements and alterations encountered in TMP. Moving forward, GIS Coordinates (latitude /longitude) should be included for each and every location of interest. He explained unauthorized culverts have been installed improperly in some locations such that they fill waterways. Commissioner Saunders added that corrugated PVC pipes used for culverting are dangerous to horse passage due to potential for slipping.

Chair Makepeace and Commissioner Saunders reported on the recent unauthorized re-routing and re-blazing of a section of the Yellow Trail near Woodhouse Avenue.

Ms. O'Hare will forward Mr. Michaels copies of past wetlands permitting in TMP as requested.

As directed by the Chair, Ms. O'Hare will request the Law Department act to correct TMP trails map information presented on outside websites that falsely present information as the Town's Official Trails Map information.

MOTION: J. Loughlin, To make no recommendation regarding Kenny Michael's proposal because the scope of issues is too broad and is far beyond our expertise.

SECOND: M. Miller

VOTE: Unanimous

C. Trails System Map

Not taken up.

D. DEEP assessment of forest health and climate change

Not taken up.

F. Other reports

Not taken up.

9. PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (POCD) - suggestions

Not taken up.

10. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Trails Work Group – TWG Report & Cliffside Trail report & information/matters not

discussed above, TWG Coordinator(s)

B. Volunteer project request, Elevate Life Church

C. Wallingford Public Library, Foraging program, 8/19, 7-8 p.m.

D. CFPA, magazine, Woodlands, Summer 2025

Items A.- D, above, not taken up.

11. NEXT MEETING – September 11, 2025

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Makepeace adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner
Acting Recording Secretary