

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

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

Thursday, September 11, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

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

Present: Jeff Borne, Erik Severson, Dianne Saunders, Jim Pyskaty, Jim Loughlin and Mike Miller (arrived 6:45 p.m.) and Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner

Absent: Chair Conor Makepeace and Vice Chair Bruce Conroy

From the public: Margaret Kitson, Chair, Environmental Conservation Committee,
Wallingford Garden Club

Upon the arrival of Commissioner Loughlin, there was a quorum. Members agreed that Commissioner Borne would act as Chair. Acting Chair Borne then convened the Meeting at 6:28 p.m..

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting, August 14, 2025

MOTION: M. Miller, To approve Minutes with the correction that D. Saunders, not J. Borne, had reported the Branford legal case about removal of stone walls from public property

SECOND: J. Loughlin

VOTE: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Outstanding Task List (excel sheet), C. Makepeace

Acting Chair Borne stated this item would wait until next month unless tasks completed can be reported on under agenda items that follow. *Commissioner Saunders would like Chair Makepeace to add 'Cliffside Drive' to the Beseck Mountain item in his excel chart.*

Commissioner Severson will follow-up on the task regarding the three trails blazed red in Marcus Cooke Park.

B. Beseck Meadow

1. Vegetation removal

Ms. O'Hare reported Dept. of Public Works had removed the vegetation from the gate and from the gap for pedestrians around the gate as requested. Bamboo was cut and removed from the Town property side but who did it is unknown – perhaps the lessee.

2. Signage

Ms. O'Hare reported she was there for the sign installation and showed the photo. The sign indicates public access is restricted to perimeter of hayfield.

C. Other property issues

1. Foraging program at Library, 8/19 – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare reported the program she attended revealed to her an unexpected slant on foraging which did not involve harvesting for commercial use or to supplement consumption but rather the use of wild plants, berries, and fungus as culinary oddities in food explorations and in crafting.

2. Other

Commissioner Pyskaty reported on trespass and some damage to Field 4C, located at the top of 1390 Whirlwind Hill Road, by motor bikers this week. He had followed the noise. They had accessed the field below from the driveway off Whirlwind Hill Rd., then crossed Field 4B – which was unharmed – entering Field 4C. Due to very tall growth you cannot see this area from the road. He determined that some kind of brush-hogging equipment had accessed the field from the rear of 23 Whirlwind Hill Rd. and then the motor bike activity had carved a dirt track at the top of the hill. The owner of 23 North Branford Road had asked what he was up to. The Commission then discussed its best to wear Commission vests in a situation like this. *Commissioner Saunders will locate and bring in some extra vests for next time.*

Commissioner Miller entered the Meeting at this time after attending the Mayor's Sept. 11 Memorial Program (6:50 p.m.).

Continuing from above, Commissioner Saunders noted two additional concerns: a) this field is currently not leased and that the hilltop supports 'Highly Erodible Soil' which could pose an issue, and b) with the drought conditions, fires here and on other uncut Town fields could pose an issue. *Commissioners Saunders and Pyskaty plan to visit the site again soon with Ms. O'Hare. Ms. O'Hare will notify the private property owner of the trespass by letter after her site visit. Ms. O'Hare will contact the Fire Marshall about the fire concern.*

3. PROPERTY MONITORING REPORTS

A. Fresh Meadows, J. Borne

Acting Chair Borne will give his report next time.

B. Beseck Meadow, M. Miller

Commissioner Miller reported on the cut bamboo which he did not cut (per item 2.B., above) and that conditions looked good.

Commissioner Saunders reported on a giant 'boundary rock' located where the three towns abut on private land near Field 20A.

C. 1254 Whirlwind Hill Rd., J. Pyskaty

This is actually the assigned open space for Commissioner Loughlin (not J. Pyskaty). *Commissioner Loughlin and will report next time.*

D. Bertini Park, C. Makepeace

Report is anticipated next time.

E. Beseck Mountain, C. Makepeace

Report is anticipated next time.

4. ORDINANCE PROPOSALS

A. Prohibition of metal detecting activities, Open space and parks to close 'at sunset', prohibition of trail construction/alteration activities, &

prohibition of foraging activities

Ms. O'Hare reported Chair Makepeace had not yet sent proposals to Law Dept.. She indicated State Rep. Mushinsky's office would forward the requested ordinance-related information soon. The ordinance proposals, discussed last month, were reviewed, *Commissioner Saunders will email the Chair her research on her proposal.*

B. Other

No other additional proposals were discussed.

MOTION: J. Pyskaty, To approve recommendation of proposed ordinances discussed to the Ordinance Committee

SECOND: D. Saunders

VOTE: Unanimous

Chair Makepeace (not present) will forward proposals to Law Department for next step in that process.

5. PROFESSIONAL NATURAL RESOURCES SERVICES

A. Invasive plant mechanical removal work

Commissioner Saunders reported on work underway with contractor Bob Baker under her oversight.

B. Other contract proposals

It was agreed that contractual work to remove stunts and jumps installed on trails can be completed in wintertime.

6. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee

Committee Chair Saunders distributed copies of a color-coded data chart for Fields #1A through #20A which indicates Committee liaison assignments with lessees, status of lease terms, etc..

Regarding Field 18A, 995 E. Center Street, Committee Chair Saunders would like to see additional signage that dogs must be leashed as the hayfield where the public can walk the perimeter abuts an unfenced lease area where cattle are pastured. *Ms. O'Hare will do this task.*

1. Monitoring Reports

Committee Chair Saunders said reports will be next time. She will take on a few of Vice Chair Conroy's lease field assignments as he has a lot. Ms. O'Hare thanked the Committee members for their help over the years as regular monitoring of the fields is important.

B. Access gate locks - report

Ms. O'Hare will be completing a gate lock system (and chart) for use on pertinent lease fields to avert possible issues.

C. Fields 7B, 7C, & 7D - gate and trespass issues

Committee Chair Saunders reported on wide open access due to damaged/absent gate, the recent damage to these fields from ATVs as a consequence, and a tree fallen across the access lane. *She will give gate dimensions to Ms. O'Hare. Ms. O'Hare will get a replacement gate installed.*

Ms. O'Hare will contact the lessee as he is new to the FLPP and may not know he needs to address the tree.

D. Field 8B – gate replacement

Committee Chair Saunders reported on damaged gate and vandalized horse fence entryway. *She will confirm that no further restoration is needed on that entryway and*

will give gate dimensions to Ms. O'Hare. Then Ms. O'Hare will get a replacement gate installed.

E. Proposed bids

Committee Chair Saunders indicated Field 5A was last cut Dec. 2024. She will furnish Ms. O'Hare suggested changes to the western side of the lease area for the Field #5A bid proposal as soon as possible. Then Ms. O'Hare will get bids up to Purchasing Dept. for advertising.

7. PUBLIC OUTREACH

A. Programs

Ms. O'Hare listed ideas for programs at the Library on making backyards for pollinators, showcasing the Town's traprock features, and wildlife conservation program by a DEEP Master Wildlife Conservationist. *Acting Chair Borne asked Commissioners to think about forming a Programming Committee to make programs happen – perhaps at the next Meeting.*

B. Facebook

Ms. O'Hare will provide Chair Makepeace the contact information for the Town personnel who can work with the Chair to set the Facebook site up for the Commission. All agreed that content may include maps, rules, hunting areas, etc. and program notices.

8. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT – TYLER MILL PRESERVE

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

Stewards Co-Chair Saunders reported work was done on the Pink Trail and minimal other work. She reported that the Health Dept. visited the Vietnam Veterans Park location of the reported spotted water hemlock with a botanist from Ct Agricultural experiment Station but had not found the poisonous plant there as previously reported to Park & Recreation Director. Commissioner Saunders felt it may have been inadvertently cut, or dried back, or perhaps they were not in the exact location. *This location should be re-visited next spring and she will do this task.*

Margaret Kitson, Chair, Environmental Conservation Committee, Wallingford Garden Club, reported that 16 members had completed invasive plant eradication in TMP in groups of 6 under C. Saunders direction. Members thanked the Club for this assistance.

B. Maltby Lane/Tyler Mill Roads - wash-out & on-going erosion, staff

Ms. O'Hare had alerted Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis per her Sept. 13 Memorandum to Kenny Michaels, Director Park & Recreation about unpermitted improvements in TMP. *She will follow-up as ideally the road repair work should be completed before winter sets in.* Commissioner Severson felt the solution was a bigger pipe under Maltby Lane and flatter roads.

C. Trails System Map, staff

Ms. O'Hare will follow-up on this Townwide trails map started in 2017.

D. DEEP assessment of forest health and climate change, D. Saunders & staff

Not taken up.

E. Other reports

None taken up.

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

Ms. O'Hare will e-mail members a copy of her recent input to the POCD initiative requested by the Planning Dept.

Acting Chair Borne requested Ms. O'Hare make sure the Open Space Plan is included in the POCD. *Ms. O'Hare will follow-up.*
Commissioner Saunders will email Ms. O'Hare a copy of the Commission's original mission statement.

10. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Trails Work Group – TWG Report

Ms. O'Hare had emailed the submitted August TWG Report to members. No one was present to present the report.

B. CFPA – membership dues

MOTION: M. Miller, To pay membership dues.

SECOND: J. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

Ms. O'Hare will process payment.

C. CACIWC – membership dues

MOTION: M. Miller, To pay membership dues.

SECOND: J. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

Ms. O'Hare will process payment.

D. Native Plants & Pollinators Fifth Annual Conference, UCONN, Nov. 13, 2025

11. NEXT MEETING – October 9, 2025

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: J. Pyskaty, To adjourn.

SECOND: M. Miller

VOTE: Unanimous

Acting Chair Borne adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner
Acting Recording Secretary