

# WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING

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

Thursday, February 19, 2026, 6:00 p.m.

## MINUTES

*NOTE: Bulleted italicized text below denotes a member or staff "action item".*

**Present:** Chair Conor Makepeace, Vice Chair Bruce Conroy, Erik Severson, Jim Loughlin, Dianne Saunders, Jim Pyskaty, and Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner

**Absent:** Jeff Borne, Mike Miller

From the public: Jack Murphy

Chair Makepeace convened the Meeting at 6:06 p.m..

### 1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

#### A. Regular Meeting, January 8, 2026

**MOTION: B. Conroy, To approve Minutes as corrected.**

**SECOND: J. Pyskaty**

**VOTE: Unanimous**

### 2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

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

Chair Makepeace reviewed completed items from the task list.

*Chair Makepeace will email the Bertini trails map he completed with GPS to all so that it can be approved.*

*Ms. O'Hare will email the Beseck Mt. trails map to all.*

*Commissioner Loughlin was delegated by the Chair the task to complete a recommendation for the revision of the three unconnected short trails all named Red Trail at Marcus Cooke to a better plan.*

#### B. Beseck Mountain - Re-route drawing of trail section of Cliffside Trail

Chair Makepeace reported not done yet. When done, IWWC permitting can be obtained for the re-routing activity and for future fencing installation activity.

#### C. Proposed ordinance to protect highly sensitive areas

Commissioner Saunders stated State Rep. Mushinsky had completed a map of highly sensitive areas which included DEEP Critical Habitats, DEEP NDDDB areas, and wetlands and watercourses and the 50-foot area surrounding wetlands and watercourses. She indicated there is an existing State statute with fining for disturbance of these areas. All agreed the above list was not comprehensive for the Commission's purposes.

**MOTION: J. Loughlin, To approve a proposed ordinance to protect highly sensitive areas**

**SECOND: D. Saunders**

**VOTE: Unanimous**

*Commissioner Saunders will assist Ms. O'Hare in 'fleshing out' the definition of 'highly sensitive areas' relative to tonight's proposed ordinance as well as language for the three proposed ordinances previously sent to Law Dept.*

**D. Trails maps information**

Ms. O'Hare reported she receives all kinds of requests for digital maps. Chair Makepeace indicated this information should simply be available to all through the Town website, e.g. the Parks & Recreation Dept. website - as it is in other towns - and that the 2023 TMP map needs to be replaced with trails map approved in June. KMZ mapping was discussed as well. Ms. O'Hare indicated she prepared a Draft Townwide Trails map in 2017 but some trails have been revised since then. The Commission felt as that information is not GPS data it is not very accurate and that a comprehensive map is unnecessary as individual maps for most of the State, Land Trust, and some Town property trails. are available to the public online.

**F. Other property issues**

Not taken up.

**3. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT – TYLER MILL PRESERVE**

**A. Natural Diversity Database information, D. Saunders**

Chair Makepeace indicated Kevin Pagini, Town Planner, can assist by converting needed DEEP NDDDB spatial data/shape file information. *Ms. O'Hare will need to submit the required signed Town agreement to DEEP for this NDDDB information.*

**B. Forestry Assessment, Forestry Plan, & Forestry Grant Opportunities**

Ms. O'Hare explained that in order to submit a feasible grant application or successfully obtain any DEEP forestry grants, the Town cannot manifest something on short notice. The background information needs to be pre-assembled ready for the next grant opportunity to come along which worked very well for the Fresh Meadows trails grant in 2015. Commissioner Saunders indicated we still need to have the Town apply online for the DEEP Forester to come down and assess TMP to provide a focus for management objectives so that we can use that in a grant proposal and we need a forester as well to write specifications for a forestry plan. *Ms. O'Hare believes the DEEP process to obtain that kind of DEEP staff assistance may have changed but she will find out and will pursue if still available to the Town.*

**C. Other**

Chair Makepeace brought up the issue of the numerous wetland violations identified in Tyler Mill Preserve conducted by unknown parties on trails - the worst of which is located on Yellow Trail West. All agreed to have the 15+- illegally installed culverts, recently GPS-ed by the Chair, removed. *Ms. O'Hare will ask Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks & Recreation Dept., if the Trails Work Group can do this work or if a contractor is needed for the work. Ms. O'Hare will prepare an RFQ.* She stated that, whoever does the work, an IWWC permit is required for the remediation activities. *Chair Makepeace will separate out the culvert location data from the other features data he had completed for TMP and send it to Ms. O'Hare for the project.*

Ms. O'Hare reported that today the Mayor requested she notify Chairman Makepeace that the proposal to allow bowhunting in TMP - aired at the last Commission Meeting - was discussed by the Mayor, the Police Chief, the Risk Manager, and Kenny Michaels on Feb. 11 and the Administration's consensus is to not pursue this proposal primarily due to liability issues and security issues. Ms. O'Hare was not at the meeting. The matter had also been discussed at the Parks & Recreation Commission's Feb. 13 Meeting, she said. Vice Chair Conroy explained that the high density of the deer in TMP has resulted in significant clearing out of the natural understory growth and ground cover vegetation. This dramatic alteration of the forest has impacted forest regrowth patterns and has removed plant material that supports other wildlife dependent on plants for sustenance and cover. He explained that the intent of the proposed bowhunting program is the reduction of the long-standing deer density issue in TMP by the

taking of some deer, and, more importantly, by deterring the deer population from congregating in TMP which currently provides a haven from surrounding hunting pressure. He feels it is important to pursue.

#### **4. PUBLIC OUTREACH**

##### **A. Request regarding Nature Corner, Wallingford Library**

*Ms. O'Hare will be meeting with the Childrens' Librarian to discuss possible nature/conservation displays as requested by library staff.*

##### **B. Program Series proposal, "How Open Space Works 24/7 for You", discussion**

Ms. O'Hare indicated she is working on retaining a presenter for this topical program for late April on the ecological services that our Town open space provides us and, with a changing climate, why the protection and management of our open lands is more important than ever. This program dovetails with the roll-out of the Draft Plan of Conservation and Development in May. *She recommends the Commission testify at the PZC hearing on the POCD to champion the 'Conservation' portion of the Plan.*

#### **5. BUDGET FY 25/26**

Not taken up.

#### **6. PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (POCD)**

##### **A. Suggestions**

##### **B. January POCD Steering Committee Meeting, report, J. Borne**

##### **C. Open Space Goal, discussion**

As Commissioner Borne was not present due to illness, Item #6 was not taken up. *He will update the Commission on the POCD next month. The Commission will provide input.*

#### **7. NEXT MEETING – March 12, 2026, 6:00 p.m.**

#### **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Makepeace adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.