

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Special Meeting Minutes (Draft)

April 16, 2026 – 6:00 PM

Room 315, Town Hall

45 South Main Street, Wallingford, Connecticut

In attendance:

Commissioners present: Conor Makepeace (Chair), Erik Severson, Mike Miller, Dianne Saunders, Jim Pyskaty, Jeff Borne; Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare. Not present: Jim Loughlin

Public: Doug Clark from Trails Work Group was in attendance

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Conor Makepeace called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

1. Approval of Minutes - postponed to the next meeting

2. Property Management

A. Outstanding Task List

- Discussion regarding Conservation Commission records and materials.
- Commission members discussed relocating Conservation Commission cabinet contents to a semi-permanent location.
- Discussion was held regarding digitizing Commission files and records, potentially utilizing budget funds.

Action Item: Erin will identify a suitable location for Conservation Commission materials. Jeff and Dianne will meet with Erin at her convenience to observe where Conservation Commission items are stored.

B. Trails Maps Information & KMZ Data

- Discussion regarding Commission website updates and mapping information.
- Conor Makepeace or another Commission representative will meet with website manager Kyle to discuss website-related matters.

C. Official Open Space Map

- Dave will convert mapping materials to PDF format and distribute them to the Commission.

D. Proposed Ordinances – Status

- Dianne Saunders provided an update regarding ordinance development.
- Discussion included:
 - State General Statutes and municipal authority.
 - Local ordinances cannot supersede state law.
 - Ordinances may either align with existing laws or address areas not currently regulated.
 - The distinction between sunset and dusk as it relates to ordinance language.
 - Open space ordinances utilized by other municipalities.
 - Differences between civil and criminal enforcement mechanisms.
- Dianne Saunders and Jim Laughlin are working on advancing open space definitions and proposed regulations.

Action Item: Dianne Saunders will prepare language outlining the difference between sunset and dusk and provide it to Kenny.

Motion: Recommend preparing a single consolidated location for all open space ordinances, including all previously discussed ordinances and any additional ordinances identified by the Commission.

- Moved by Jim Pyskaty
- Seconded by Erik Severson

- Motion passed unanimously.

E. Ferguson Woods – Field Mowing

- Item determined to no longer be necessary.

F. 205 Main Street, Yalesville

- Discussion regarding the property.
- It was reported that the Town will not mow the property.

G. Beseck Mountain

1. Cliffside Trail

1A. Restoration Work on Access to National Scenic Trail

- Erin presented a progress report on restoration efforts.
- Presentation included:
 - History of the National Scenic Trail.
 - Trail-related events and activities.
 - Potential entrance fencing.
 - Neighbor outreach and engagement efforts.
 - Invasive species management at the trail entrance.

1B. Lower Portion of Trail – Permitting, Re-route Work & Marking

- Discussion continued regarding restoration activities and trail access improvements.
- Discussion regarding the Beseck Mountain Bog Bridge project.
- It was reported that the bridge project will proceed.
- A Commission representative will attend the June Inland Wetlands Commission meeting regarding the project.

2. Proposed Signage

- Discussion on additional trail signage. No official action items or motions.

H. Other Property Issues

- Discussion regarding Fresh Meadow.
- Land Trust trail connection from Rosick Road was discussed.
- Wetland professionals met at Tyler Mill regarding potential wetland mitigation efforts.

Action Item: Letter of support to be prepared and submitted for the wetland mitigation project.

3. Property Management - Tyler Mill Preserve

A. Steward's Report

- Discussion continued to the next agenda.

B. Natural Diversity Database Information

- Discussion regarding the vernal pool study done by Klemens and Quinn and the need to specifically protect the two Tier-1 vernal pools at Tyler Mill Preserve.

Motion: Recommend utilizing Conservation Commission funding to retain a herpetologist to delineate the life zone surrounding Vernal Pool TP-1 and provide management recommendations for same..

- Moved by Erik Severson
- Seconded by Jeff Borne
- Motion passed unanimously.

C. Culvert Removals – Status

- Meeting held with the Mayor and Town staff regarding culvert removal at Tyler Mill Preserve.
- Discussion of potential solutions for multiple infrastructure and environmental concerns.
- Discussion regarding Tyler Mill Preserve as a significant staff and volunteer resource commitment.
- Discussion regarding the potential need for a part-time or full-time Conservation Officer.

Action Item: Identify and prioritize the most problematic culverts for future removal efforts.

D. Other

4. Property Monitoring Reports

A. Beseck Meadow

- Erin reported obtaining a new sign for the property.

- Discussion continued regarding monitoring and outreach efforts.

B. Wharton Brook Corridor / Doolittle Park

- No report provided.
- Discussion continued to the next agenda.

5. Public Outreach

A. Report on Planned Presentation

- Erin presented an update regarding public outreach activities.
- Discussion included a potential presentation involving Anthony Zemba; it was reported that the event will not move forward at this time due to scheduling conflicts and Erin's retirement, but to try to hold this event in the Fall.
- Discussion regarding funding opportunities for larger conservation projects and future project planning.

6. Budget FY26/27

A. Town Council Hearing

- Discussion of future conservation commission opportunities.

B. Town Council Public Hearing

- Discussion continued to the next agenda.

7. Professional Natural Resource Services FY25/26

Motion: Recommend that the Mayor retain a forester to develop a forestry management plan in accordance with Connecticut forestry statutes to improve eligibility for state forestry grants.

- Moved by Jeff Borne
- Seconded by Mike Miller
- Motion passed unanimously.

8. Plan of Conservation and Development

A. POCD Steering Committee Meeting

B. Open Space Goals Statement for Hearing

9. Farmland Lease Properties Program

A. Interim Supervision of Program by Water Division

- No report provided.
- Discussion continued to next agenda.

B. Farmland Lease Committee

- No report provided.
- Discussion continued to next agenda.

10. Reports and Correspondence

A. Connecticut Land Conservation Conference

- No additional motions or action items

B. Trails Work Group

- No additional motions or action items

Motion to Adjourn

- Moved by Erik Severson
- Seconded by Jim Laughlin
- Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 PM.