

Final / Approved

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, July 9, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

**Fresh Meadows Open Space Property
North Parking Area
136 Cheshire Road, Wallingford, CT**

MINUTES

Note: The Conservation Commission Regular Meeting of July 9, 2020, 7:00 p.m., in Town Hall was cancelled. In its place, this Special Meeting for July 9, 2020, 6:00 p.m., at Fresh Meadows Open Space Property was duly posted with the Wallingford Town Clerk and on the Wallingford Town website. The purpose of the Special Meeting was to conduct the regular business of the Commission and to see the new plantings on the site.

Present: Chair Mary Heffernon, Vice Chair John Lathrop, Commissioners Jared McQueen, Dianne Lendler, and Dianne Saunders and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare. Commissioner Brad Sammis arrived at 6:10 p.m. Commissioner Mike Miller arrived at 7:23 p.m.

Absent: Commissioners Jeffrey Borne and Carl Arsenault.

Chair Heffernon called this Special Meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES, Regular Meeting, March 12, 2020

The Draft Minutes for March 12, 2020 were not considered tonight. (Note: The Commission's Regular Meetings for April, May and June had been canceled due to the Corona virus pandemic.)

2. PROPERTY REPORTS

Tyler Mill Preserve – Commissioner Saunders said all trails are in good condition.

Commissioner Lendler brought up that the White Trail behind the Vietnam Veterans Park sign is not maintained by anyone, it's wet, and it is not sustainable. Other trails are in good condition, so she felt the White Trail could be left as it is. The farmer cuts the edges now. The Committee believes that the White Trail should be shut down. *Chair Heffernon said the Trails Committee will go out and evaluate the White Trail.*

Field 4C off Whirlwind Hill Road at the top – Commissioner Lendler said there is a thick area of debris blocking the water. *Commissioner Lendler will ask the neighbor Mr. Termini to report to her as dumping is occurring.* Ms. O'Hare stated that this property has just been leased. (See item 4.A.3.)

1250 Whirlwind Hill Road – A week ago, Commissioner Saunders saw that a landscape timber was put in there. The new lessee might have put it up as a gate. *Ms. O'Hare will find out from Public Works whether they mowed the 25-foot strip across this field or Field 4A. Ms. O'Hare will affirm proper address.*

Bertini Park – Vice Chair Lathrop said on entering the parking lot at West Dayton Hill Road there is a huge pile of wood chips. The Town placed two telephone poles to block the trail at the top, and there is a second pile of wood chips at the top. The trails are in good shape.

Main Street Open Space in Yalesville – Commissioner Sammis’ report included a photo of the property’s Open Space sign. Chair Heffernon asked if that main sign could be repaired. *Ms. O’Hare will look into having the sign patch-filled by the sign carver.* Commissioner Sammis said someone has to be sure of where the property line is because the neighbor is encroaching on the property. Recently, Ms. O’Hare spoke with Corporation Counsel Janis Small about this. *Ms. O’Hare will follow up on this boundary and liability issue with Ms. Small.*

Marcus Cooke Park – Commissioner McQueen said the property line for Marcus Cooke Park is well within the woods from any of the houses. He said the trails are used and well worn. There is no sign of damage from bikes. Trails are in good shape except the Purple Trail, which is overgrown. Commissioner McQueen trims it regularly, but work is needed on the Purple Trail requiring a crew with chainsaws.

Cooke Road, Field 5A – Commissioner Saunders said this field is not leased. The perimeter is overgrown and there are no formal hiking trails, but people are allowed to use the perimeter. At the north end, the boundary markers are not up yet on the new Field 5B. After the neighbor cuts his hay, Commissioner Saunders will go in the laneway and look. Also, in March and April, she heard good numbers of wood frogs after sunset and also in late morning. She will put this “Frog Watch” document and a copy of that protocol into the Biota file for 5A.

Ms. O’Hare stated there are green frogs and bullfrogs on this Fresh Meadows property.

Ferguson Woods – Chair Heffernon said the trails are in good shape. Some cutting back needs to be done. Commissioner Arsenault had used a brush machine to clean up part of the site. *Chair Heffernon and Vice Chair Lathrop will cut the knotweed at the entrance.*

Field 20A, Beseck Meadow, off Powder Hill Road, Durham – See Commissioner Miller’s report after item 4.A. below.

Speakers on Mountain Biking: Ms. Lisa Maloney, Vice President of the Central Connecticut chapter of the Northeast Mountain Bike Association, and Mr. Bruce Taylor of the group, asked to address the Commissioners.

Ms. Maloney and Mr. Taylor said their chapter heard recently that a mile of illegal biking trail was built at Tyler Mill Preserve in Wallingford. They asked how their organization, NMBA, could assist the Commission. Commissioner Saunders said the Property Stewards here do cleanup parties, but the Commission does not want workers cutting through habitat. Chair Heffernon said the trail has been eliminated. Ms. Maloney said their group promotes the use of established trails and they could reinforce that message to users. Commissioners noted that some historic foundations have been taken down—unauthorized—by riders in order to make trail bumps. Commissioner Saunders said the object is to have mountain bikers ride on the blazed trails and not disturb the surrounding area. Mainly, Commissioner Saunders has seen bikers being respectful of the areas. Ms. Maloney and Mr. Taylor left the meeting at this time.

3. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Stewards of Tyler Mill

Commissioner Saunders spoke about the loss of three longtime Property Stewards. Commissioner Lendler added that she has asked the Mayor to formally acknowledge these persons and their service. Also, Commissioner Saunders commended Commissioner Lendler's work with the Stewards.

2. Brush mower work
Brush mowing was done in Tyler Mill and Ferguson Woods.
3. Trail head signage – Vice Chair Lathrop completed the trail signs and they are in place.
4. Kiosk sign correction – Has been made.
5. Yellow Trail – proposal to address wet trail
Scott Gray and Wayne Fogg re-routed this short section of trail.
6. Other reports – None.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Tour of new plant installations and vine removal

After this meeting was adjourned, Ms. O'Hare led the Commissioners to see the new native plant installations that were planted by the pond and the Butterfly Meadow by vendor Earth Tones using the Commission's budget. They also observed the new butterfly bush plantings on the Butterfly Meadow Loop Trail. Ms. O'Hare said the erosion issue has been fixed.

2. Kiosk content proposal

Ms. O'Hare gave Commissioners copies of the new map of "Fresh Meadows Open Space Property" tonight. Ms. O'Hare recommended that the kiosk needs this new map plus a new plexiglass and a panel that features the native species here. Chair Heffernon asked that the kiosk content should depict the year-round features, rather than to have a changing exhibit. Ms. O'Hare suggested the habitats could be shown. Commissioner Saunders thought of a chronological story board with art and labels/explanations. Ms. O'Hare said she often finds people of different ages using Fresh Meadows.

3. Trees by glacial erratic

Mayor Dickinson had received a letter from a citizen who asked for trees by this boulder to be cleared away on the north side so the boulder could be viewed from this side. The Commission observed the vicinity and the tall trees there. Vice Chair Lathrop suggested that some trees could be limbed up to give greater visibility for the rock. *The Commissioners agreed, and they will consult with Commissioner Arsenault regarding feasibility and impact to trees as well as with Director of Parks and Recreation Kenny Michaels.*

4. Name on Town Open Space property signage

Chair Heffernon recommended that the words "Fresh Meadows" could be on a separate sign placed above the main sign. *Ms. O'Hare will follow through.*

5. Graffiti

Ms. O'Hare said some graffiti was removed by Parks and Recreation and Public Works personnel, but some remains. *Ms. O'Hare will discuss this with Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels.*

6. Private memorial request & bench relocation

Ms. O'Hare said the family purchased a new bench, and the Town Council approved it as a donation. The family will have a name plaque installed on it as a memorial, and the new bench will be installed near the boulder in place of the current bench, which the Town will use elsewhere. Public Works personnel will

install the new bench and the relocated bench.. *The Commission needs to choose the location for the relocated bench.*

C. Ferguson Woods

This was discussed above at Item 2. Property Reports.

D. Other properties

1. Hope Hill Road area – incident – open space boundary markers removed

Ms. O’Hare said the Community Police officer has not returned her call. Chair Heffernon said the students involved should be made to do some task for the Town. Ms. O’Hare said Town Engineering personnel reinstalled all of the Town Open Space Property signs, but Engineering did not restore the Wetlands signs as they were on private property.

2. Grand Street Park garden

Chair Heffernon said this is in planning, and the garden will be topsoiled and planted in September.

4. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee

1. Bid proposals: Fields 5A, 7A, & 8B

Commissioner Saunders reported that there are persons interested in leasing these fields, but they do not want the responsibility to do the associated conservation work. Ms. O’Hare proposed that the fields could be let out for bid but with vendors doing the conservation work *The Commissioners agreed to proceed on bidding out these fields either with or without the conservation work requirements.*

Commissioner Mike Miller joined the meeting at 7:23 p.m. He gave his report, to be included with Item 2. Property Reports, as follows:

Field 20A, Beseck Meadow (off Powder Hill Road, Durham). Commissioner Miller said the lessee has not mowed or brush worked this field. He called the lessee today and left a message. He had taken photos showing that: 1) The access road is grown in with bamboo. 2) The access itself is grown over. 3) A neighbor farther in (at the south side rear house) is putting in a pool and took down a section of the Town fence. In addition, that neighbor built a road that meets the Town access road. He believes the neighbor is using the area for access and staging of materials. Chair Heffernon noted that a prior owner there was using the Town access road for his driveway. Ms. O’Hare stated, even if the owner is not building on Town property, it is not acceptable. *Chair Heffernon asked Ms. O’Hare to call or write to the owner “to cease the trespass use of Town property.”* Also, Ms. O’Hare told the Commission that it is written in the Field 20A lease that the lessee must cut the access road early in the season and he is not to cut the bamboo.

Commissioner McQueen left the meeting at 7:38 p.m.

2. Bid waiver: Field 18A, 995C East Center Street

Ms. O’Hare said this Field 18A lease was approved for bid waiver by the Town Council and lease was processed to Warren Williams.

3. Bid to be awarded: Fields 4A, 19A, & 4C

A new lessee is interested in leasing these for pasture and hay. Commissioner Saunders reported that other properties owned by the prospective lessee appear to be well managed. Ms. O’Hare stated the Town Council awarded this bid to The Johnson Family Farm.

B. RFQ Autumn olive tree removal – Field 4C, Whirlwind Hill Rd./Scard Rd.

Ms. O’Hare said she believes that the lessee for this Field 4C might take down the Autumn olive trees.

C. Field 7A, Northford Rd. – hunter parking proposal & vehicle trespass issue

Ms. O’Hare said the parking area is at the top in the Right-Of-Way. Commissioner Saunders said a large tree fell about half-way down the hill. *Commissioners agreed to leave it there. Ms. O’Hare will follow up regarding the parking area.*

5. BUDGET FY 20-21

Ms. O’Hare reported that the Town Council removed \$500 from the Commission’s “Professional Services - Natural Resources” budget line, so only \$5,500 is available this fiscal year.

6. PUBLIC EVENTS – History Hike in Tyler Mill Preserve – June 2021

Commissioner Saunders’ plan for this History Hike is now set for next year.

7. REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE

A. CFPA magazine, CT Woodlands, Summer 2020 was received.

B. DEEP magazine, CT Wildlife, Mar.-Apr. 2020 was received.

8. NEXT MEETING – August 13, 2020

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Lendler to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Vice Chair Lathrop, and approved unanimously.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m. A tour of the new plantings plus a walk around the glacial erratic was taken with Ms. O’Hare.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns, Recording Secretary