

**Final / Approved**

**WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**SPECIAL MEETING**

**Thursday, February 11, 2021, 6:00 p.m.  
Room #1, Parks & Recreation Department  
6 Fairfield Boulevard, Wallingford, CT**

Note: The February 11, 2021 Regular Meeting in Town Hall for 7:00 p.m. was cancelled and a Special Meeting was set and held at Room #1, Parks & Recreation Department, 6 Fairfield Boulevard, Wallingford, CT, at 6:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Present:** Chair Mary Heffernon, Vice Chair John Lathrop, and Commissioners Jared McQueen, Brad Sammis, and Dianne Saunders, and Environmental Planner Erin O’Hare. Commissioners Jeffrey Borne, Carl Arsenault, and Mike Miller arrived as noted below. Mr. Ed Bradley from the public was present.

**Absent:** Commissioner Dianne Lendler

Chair Heffernon called this Special Meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

**Motion was made by Vice Chair Lathrop to waive Rule 5 in order to add an item that is not on the agenda; seconded by Commissioner McQueen, and approved unanimously.**

Chair Heffernon added the following item:

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Ed Bradley of Hampton Trail brought up his continued interest in open space in Town. He referred to the December proposal to the Planning and Zoning Commission to change a portion of the I-5 and I-X zones regulation language.

Commissioner Borne arrived at 6:09 p.m.

Mr. Bradley said the proposed changes would allow additional development in those zones. Currently, those zones share the overlay zone, Watershed Protection District. The State classifies the area as Class A. Many homes are on wells, and residents are currently recommended to have increased fluoride in their well water.

Mr. Bradley’s purpose was to advocate for farmland there to be purchased by the Town for open space. He described an area near Route 68 and Williams Road. About 75% of that total watershed goes to the Muddy River—a tributary to McKenzie Reservoir, which supplies 94% of the Town’s drinking water. It is worthwhile to protect the land and to protect the drinking water. The whole area has wildlife. Commissioner Saunders noted that State money could be available.

Commissioner Arsenault arrived at 6:16 p.m.

Chair Heffernon thanked Mr. Bradley for his information and his views. Mr. Bradley left the meeting at this time.

Commissioner Mike Miller entered the meeting at 6:18 p.m.

Commissioner Saunders asked about the Watershed Protection District proposal status with the Planning and Zoning Commission. Commissioner Saunders thought the issue was on the P&Z agenda for March. *Ms. O'Hare will check the status with Planning and Zoning staff and report back.*

## **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

### **A. Special Meeting, January 14, 2021**

**Motion by Commissioner Miller to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2021; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.**

## **2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

### **A. Tyler Mill Preserve**

#### **1. Stewards of Tyler Mill – report, D. Saunders & D. Lendler**

Commissioner Saunders said she had not been out at Tyler Mill Preserve due to the recent snowstorms. Especially on Sundays, people do go into Tyler Mill by the Northford Road entrance.

#### **2. Illegal trail making**

Chair Heffernon reported that a meeting was held with the Mayor, Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels, the Police Chief, Corporation Counsel Janis Small, and herself recently. Tonight Chair Heffernon read the response letter from Mr. Glen Vernes, President of the New England Mountain Bikers Association. He says he also objects to the construction of illegal trails and bridges by bikers at Tyler Mill Preserve. NEMBA is aware of unpermitted trails here being posted on the web, and they would like to help the Town and the Conservation Commission, but no concrete plans to help were offered. Commissioner Saunders suggested only allowing mountain bikers in there three days a week. Commissioner Arsenault said they are already not supposed to go in on hunting days. Commissioner Miller asked if the Town would be agreeable to saying, “No more mountain biking at Tyler Mill”, such as has been done at Sleeping Giant State Park. Chair Heffernon asked how they enforce that. Commissioner Miller said that the private Park Association asked the State about making that kind of prohibition, and the State agreed to it. Commissioner Arsenault said it was never officially allowed at Tyler Mill Preserve, but people entered to bike, and the biking population grew. Commissioner Miller said his Association had debated whether or not to allow it. At certain places they put up signs saying, “No bikes allowed per State law.” Vice Chair Lathrop asked where his association publicized that. Commissioner Miller said it went into their newsletters and they put up signs at the trailheads—and people stopped using unauthorized trails. Commissioner Arsenault said that law enforcement did assist here by giving out tickets, and the activity stopped. If Tyler Mill is closed to mountain bikes completely, then persons coming in should be ticketed. *Commissioner Saunders will contact Attorney Small and Kenny Michaels.*

Ms. O'Hare suggested asking NEMBA to put in its newsletter that “Creation of trails is not allowed and will be prosecuted.”

Commissioner Sammis suggested appointing a short-term committee for this issue and to report back in March with suggestions. The Commissioners agreed to this. Commissioners Saunders and Miller thought the Stewards are effective, and we need their help and suggestions to approach the public. *The*

Commissioners agreed to have a committee. Commissioners Borne and Miller will be on it. The object would be to come up with suggestions to refer to Attorney Small.

3. Other reports – None.

**B. Fresh Meadows**

1. Addition of park name on Town Open Space property signage

Chair Heffernon showed a photo of the new signage. It looks good.

2. Trees of Heaven

Chair Heffernon reported that the Lyman Hall High School Agricultural Science students could not get into the field yet to trim the trees she and Commissioner Arsenault flagged, but they will do after the snow melts.

**C. 205 Main Street open space property**

1. Encroachment – It is snowed in, and Ms. O’Hare had no new information, but she reiterated the need for fencing. *The Commission unanimously agreed to have fencing installed to stop the encroachment issue.*

2. Repair of Town open space property signage

Ms. O’Hare said the new sign is up.

**D. Beseck Meadows**

1. Encroachment over southern property line

*Ms. O’Hare said she will assess encroachment when the snow melts.*

2. Bamboo – cutting & private encroachment by bamboo

Ms. O’Hare has not talked with Public Works about the latest idea on the bamboo work. *Ms. O’Hare will follow up when the snow melts.*

**E. Other properties – None.**

**3. ‘SUSTAINABLE CONNECTICUT’ – discussion**

Commissioner Borne and Ms. O’Hare recommended that this concept, as presented last month by Ms. Koepfer, is a broad topic and requires many people, including volunteers. Being named a “Sustainable Town” is a “plus” for towns that seek grant monies. The Commissioners’ consensus was that they are generally supportive of Ms. Koepfer’s efforts, but that Ms. Koepfer should talk to other department heads and obtain individual volunteers as well. *Chair Heffernon will respond to Ms. Koepfer.*

**4. AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE STUDENT INITIATIVE**

Chair Heffernon reported that Emily Picard of Lyman Hall High School has proposed a project for Lyman Hall Agricultural Science students to conduct with input from Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels and the Conservation Commission. The Agricultural students would like to use a piece of Town property between the Lyman Hall fields and Pat Wall Field as a natural laboratory. Chair Heffernon said Emily is interested in having the students do field observations and habitat mapping. Chair Heffernon, Ms. O’Hare, and Commissioner Saunders saw this as a good opportunity for an educational program.

**5. BUDGET FY 20-21** – Professional Services – Natural Resources – discussion of uses

Ms. O’Hare said \$5,500 is available in this budget line until June 30. *Chair Heffernon will focus on the completion of Grand Street Park. Commissioners made a wish list, which they will think over for use of this and next year’s budget priorities.*

**6. BUDGET FY 21-22** – Professional Services – Natural Resources – discussion regarding proposals

*Chair Heffernon and Ms. O’Hare will meet with Mayor Dickinson on March 4<sup>th</sup> concerning the FY 21-22 budget proposal.* Commissioners made these suggestions for projects to do under the Commission’s budget:

- Bamboo spraying;
- Invasive species eradication, such as the Phragmites at Tyler Mill Preserve behind the old dam, and for Fresh Meadows;
- Funding for mountain biker property abuse solutions;
- Park benches, suggested by Ms. O’Hare;
- Peanut Pond – enhance public access by putting fill material down in an area where people could walk out; or to build a small dock for fishing or a small boat launch;
- At the Main Street Open Space encroachment area, to build a fence behind the house;
- Open Space properties enhancements (Stewards to identify): e.g., generally need to enhance them; trees cut down; put a gravel walkway;
- Osprey platform installation (location to be determined);
- Tree installation; owl boxes; bluebird boxes at various sites and a wood duck box for the Fresh Meadows pond;
- Maltby Lane – to redesign the culvert and permanently eliminate the erosion issue;
- Beseck Mountain at Cliffside Trail – to install a barricade to ATV/mountain bike use with off-set bollards; also, clearing of fallen logs from trail on slope;
- Footbridge repairs at Tyler Mill; and to improve drainage at the new channel by the footbridge;
- Presentation fees, e.g., for the photographer who does the public program on owls – to do one for the public;
- Funding to have a portable model-size mill replica made plus a sign for the Tyler Mill Historical Walk;
- Funding for general enhancements on Town Open Space properties.

*Chair Heffernon advised Ms. O’Hare ask for \$6,000 in this budget line.*

Commissioner McQueen left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

**7. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM**

**A. Farmland Lease Committee**

*Ms. O’Hare will send a letter to the lessee following up on the phone call and fax sent previously about restoring the road in the field and the gate on Anderson Road.* Commissioner Miller suggested that the Conservation Commission could put up a fence or a gate. Commission consensus was for Town to install a farm gate. *Ms. O’Hare will follow up.*

Ms. O’Hare reported that one lessee paid his overdue bill through December 2020.

Ms. O’Hare reported recently receiving letters from the U.S. Farm Service Bureau that included Google maps of certain Town-owned farm fields.

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

*Ms. O'Hare will put out the bids for these three fields in the spring.*

**C. Field 7A, Northford Rd.** – hunter parking proposal

No new information.

**D. Several fields** – compliance with lease terms

Ms. O'Hare said there is no report yet

**8. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE**

**A. Preservation Connecticut, newsletter** – CT preservation awards, etc. – received 1/12/21

**B. CT Farmland Trust** – summary of 2020 successes; received 1/12/21

**C. DEEP magazine, CT Wildlife**, Nov.-Dec. 2020

**9. NEXT MEETING** – March 11, 2021.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion was made by Commissioner Borne to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Vice Chair Lathrop, and approved unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns  
Recording Secretary