

Final / Approved

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

**Thursday, April 8, 2021, 6:00 p.m.
Room #7, Parks & Recreation Department
6 Fairfield Boulevard, Wallingford, CT**

Note: The April 8, 2021 Regular Meeting in Town Hall for 7:00 p.m. was cancelled and a Special Meeting was set and held at Room #7, 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 Dianne Lendler, Jared McQueen, Dianne Saunders, and Brad Sammis. There were two persons from the public. Other Commissioners arrived later as noted.

Chair Heffernon called the Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Special Meeting, Mar. 11, 2021

Motion by Commissioner Lendler to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of March 11, 2021, as presented; seconded by Vice Chair Lathrop and approved unanimously.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Saunders said that Public Works personnel replaced the vandalized guardrails with concrete blocks at the bridge. Commissioner Lendler made a property report with photos.

Commissioner Saunders reported on the corduroy section of the Green Trail and erosion from the culvert nearby on Tyler Mill Road. *Chair Heffernon will ask Eric Hansen to look at this area and advise.*

2. Bat boxes

Bat boxes cost \$219 to \$300 each. These are weatherproof and blend into surroundings. Commissioners suggested locations. Chair Heffernon recommended buying three. *Ms. O'Hare will check with DEEP for advice on bat boxes and on more locations on other open space properties.*

Commissioner Mike Miller arrived at 6:08 p.m.

Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop: To purchase three bat boxes and poles at an approximate total cost of \$300 each; seconded by Commissioner Lendler, and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Jeffrey Borne arrived at 6:11 p.m.

3. Tupelo trees

Commissioner Saunders has seen tupelo trees in the Tamarac Swamp, at Fresh Meadows near the pond and along Northford Road by Field 8B—all good habitats. Any young plantings need to be weeded at first. They will grow 50 to 70 feet tall and have brilliant fall foliage. These would show well from the hilltops of the Lilac and Orange Trails, looking down at Field 8B. *Chair Heffernon asked Commissioner Saunders to obtain prices on male and female very young trees, including delivery and installation.*

4. Other reports

Chair Heffernon noted that Branford has signs posted saying “This is not a trail. Walk only on blazed trails.” to help protect forest lands.

Chair Heffernon suggested that an osprey nest platform could be installed near Tyler Mill Preserve. A few years ago, an osprey was fishing in the Muddy River after it was stocked. *Chair Heffernon, Vice Chair Lathrop and Commissioner Arsenault will look for an appropriate habitat location. Vice Chair Lathrop volunteered to construct the platform.*

Motion by Commissioner Miller to buy osprey platform materials at an approximate cost of \$400.00; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously. *Ms. O’Hare will obtain a Tax ID Certificate for the purchase.*

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Memorial tree.

The tree guard was too tight, and Commissioner Saunders loosened it. She also located Ken Ryan’s memorial rock nearby and cleared weeds around it.

2. Bluebird boxes

Commissioner Saunders saw that tree swallows are using the halos on bluebird boxes now.

3. Vine removal

A contractor was scheduled to do this last fall. Ms. O’Hare reported that she worked with the Contractor recently, and vines on all 13 earmarked trees have now been removed.

4. ‘No Idling’ signage

Chair Heffernon had seen persons parked at Fresh Meadows with their car engines idling. To curb pollution, Chair Heffernon discussed the posting of “No Idling” signs with Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels. The Commissioners supported this request.

5. Peninsula by southern parking area entrance

This grassed spot by the southern lot driveway has been damaged by drivers running over it. *Commissioners endorsed Ms. O’Hare’s suggestion to ask Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis to have a large rock placed here.*

Commissioner Carl Arsenault joined the meeting at 6:37 p.m.

6. Fishing platform

Ms. O’Hare brought engineering designs for a platform and gave them to Commissioner Borne. The original cost was \$28,000, and Ms. O’Hare suggested that the Commission could apply for grant money for it. Commissioner Saunders thought the pond supports would be concrete piers. Chair

Heffernon noted we have had droughts when the pond is low, but Commissioner Borne thought the last survey showed it is a viable pond. *Chair Heffernon asked Commissioner Borne to study the plans and report back.*

C. 205 Main Street open space property

1. Encroachment

The Commission had previously agreed to install fencing here. *Ms. O’Hare will talk with Corporation Counsel Janis Small about installing a Town fence by the encroaching neighbor’s property.*

D. Beseck Meadows

1. Encroachment over southern property line

This long-term encroachment was initially reported by Commissioners Miller and Arsenault. Commissioner Miller reported Field 20A has not been cut since it was cut in May 2020, the field edges need trimming, and the access road is eroding down into the stream. Ms. O’Hare has photos of previous encroachment. *Ms. O’Hare will go see the site again and ask Mayor Dickinson to allow a fence in this location, and she will ask Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis to get contractor prices for a fence.*

2. Bamboo – cutting & private encroachment by bamboo

Commissioner Miller saw that most of the Town’s bamboo here was cut down to 2” high and sprayed. Ms. O’Hare thought the farmer may possibly have cut it. *Commissioner Miller will call the farmer about this and ask about the fence post by the gate.*

3. Fence proposal – Discussed at D.1. above.

E. Cliffside Drive

Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis will meet with Chair Heffernon, Vice Chair Lathrop and Commissioner Arsenault to plan how to deter ATVs. Commissioners discussed using signage and boulders to block the trail.

F. Property Monitoring Reports – J. Lathrop, C. Arsenault, M. Miller, D. Lendler

Commissioner Arsenault said the trail at Beseck Mountain off Cliffside Drive is not changed much. A few trees are on the trail. Some yard waste was dumped on the cul-de-sac at the end of Wisk-Key Wind Road. *Commissioner Arsenault will obtain addresses so that Ms. O’Hare can write to the neighbors.* Commissioner Borne wanted to know who owns the power lines area where ATVs gain access. *Commissioner Borne will try to obtain owners’ addresses to write them to help with this issue.*

Vice Chair Lathrop said ATVs have come into Bertini Park from the west side, from the Green and Blue Trails parking lot and from Fox Run Drive. At the top of the Blue Trail, a tree blowdown is blocking the trail. The new blue blazes on the rerouted trail are good.

Regarding Maltby Lane, Commissioner Saunders reported the north side open space boundary markers are confusing. The south markers at the edge of the field have been in for two years. Ms. O’Hare asked if there are signs on the other side of the road. *Commissioner Lendler will look at the situation and report back.*

See D. Beseck Meadows, above, for Commissioner Miller’s report.

For May, Property Monitoring Reports will be due from Commissioners Sammis, Borne, Heffernon and from Ms. O’Hare regarding Doolittle Park.

G. Other properties

Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels will meet with Chair Heffernon and Ms. O'Hare at the Grand Street garden location to discuss the Pollinator Garden.

3. STUDENT PROJECTS

A. Agricultural Science Student Initiative

Emily Picard, teacher, will have the students map the area, pick up trash and take photos at the land lab parcel near Lyman Hall High School and submit the required Wetland permitting form.

B. Lyman Hall National Honor Society Students Project

Chair Heffernon said there are about 70 Honor Society students. Project suggestions made were: to collect trash between Walmart and Community Pool; at Fresh Meadows, to put stain on the parking lot guardrails or on the Girl Scout bridge; or at the Grand Street Pollinator Garden to do plantings. *Chair Heffernon will recontact the Advisor.*

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

Ms. O'Hare reported that \$6,000 remains to be used by June 30. Commissioners agreed to fund the osprey platform, tupelo trees, and possibly to obtain quotes for invasive species eradication. *Ms. O'Hare will contact EarthTones about mechanical removal of invasives. Ms. O'Hare will ask Public Works whether the bench removed from Fresh Meadows could be put near Ken Ryan's tree.*

Commissioners asked Ms. O'Hare to find out whether the Open Space Users Group annual meetings could be restarted.

5. BUDGET FY 21-22

A. Professional Services – Natural Resources – Discussion regarding proposed uses.

Commissioner Saunders said the Fresh Meadows orchard vegetation should be cut. Since Commissioner Borne has seen that Phragmites do not survive in shade, he proposed planting trees around those. Prior discussion was that it should be cut with brush cutters and covered with tarps. Commissioner Miller offered a gas-powered weed cutter. Ms. O'Hare said the whole mat could possibly be dug out with heavy equipment, as has been done in other places in Connecticut. *Ms. O'Hare and Chair Heffernon will research this issue.*

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

Commissioner Saunders brought up about honeysuckle and barberry that should be removed near the Purple and Green Trails in Tyler Mill Preserve. Ms. O'Hare noted a talk by Cathy Connelly on "Mugwort Removal by Mechanical Means."

B. (Remote) Public Hearing for the public, April 12, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

C. (Remote) Budget Workshop for Town Council, May 4, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

6. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee

Ms. O'Hare will get the bids ready for these fields for the Committee to review. The Farmland Lease Committee has not met recently. Typically, the Town lease has the farmer-lessee do the conservation area maintenance work, but the properties will now be leased without specifying conservation management tasks. Commissioner Saunders said a number of farmer-lessees used to do

the conservation tasks, but not all. *Commissioner Saunders suggested the Committee will prioritize the conservation management tasks and will let that work out to a third-party vendor.*

B. Bid Proposals: Fields 5A, 7A, & 8B

If there were a change in lease content above, then Ms. O'Hare said she would remove all the specified conservation areas from the leases and maps and insert lease language about allowing "access" for any contractors accordingly.

C. Field 7A, Northford Rd. – hunter parking proposal. Not discussed.

D. Fields 7B, 7C, 7D – gate. Not discussed.

E. Several fields – compliance with lease terms. Not discussed.

7. BIG EVENT – Quinnipiac University – April 10

This will be held from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at Tyler Mill Preserve. *Chair Heffernon and Commissioners Saunders and Lendler and a Steward will direct the University students on various tasks including re-painting blaze markers on trails.*

8. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. DEEP magazine, CT Wildlife, Jan.-Feb. 2021 was received

B. CFPA magazine, CT Woodlands, was received.

C. Northford Road Bridge – report.

Ms. O'Hare's Staff Report was received.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to waive Rule 5 in order to go into Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner Miller, and approved unanimously.

The Recording Secretary and two members of the public left the room at 7:57 p.m.

At 8:08 p.m. the Recording Secretary was called back into the room.

Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to come out of Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner Sammis, and approved unanimously.

10. NEXT MEETING – May 13, 2021

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Borne to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioners Lendler and Sammis, and approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns, Recording Secretary