

Draft

MINUTES

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, April 14, 2022, 6:00 p.m.

Room 315, Town Hall

45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT

This Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held on Thursday, April 14, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 315 of Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT.

Present: Chair Mike Miller, Vice Chair John Lathrop, and Commissioners Jared McQueen, Dianne Lendler, James Pyskaty, and Jeffrey Borne (arrived at 6:08 p.m.), and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare.

Absent: Commissioners Carl Arsenault, Brad Sammis, and Dianne Saunders.

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Regular Meeting, Jan. 13, 2022** – cancelled
- B. Regular Meeting, Feb. 10, 2022** – cancelled
- C. Special Meeting, Feb. 17, 2022** – see below
- D. Regular Meeting, Mar. 10, 2022** – cancelled

C. Special Meeting, Feb. 17, 2022

Motion by Commissioner Pyskaty to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of February 17, 2022, as presented; seconded by Commissioner McQueen, and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Jeffrey Borne entered the meeting at this time.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Lendler said the Stewards have been doing tree cutting in the last month.

Invasives are starting to grow. Unauthorized cutting has occurred off-trail and downstream. Someone brought in a picnic table to the bridge and chained it to the guardrail. More Stewards will be added to help with the trails over the spring. The Pink Trail South has erosion issues; the beginning of the

Purple Trail and the Red Trail going south need repair. She asked Vice Chair Lathrop if the Trail Committee can help with that.

2. Bat boxes – installation

Ms. O’Hare will find a contractor to install the 15-foot poles down 2 to 3 feet in concrete and then to affix the six-foot-high bat boxes on top.

3. Green Trail repair & footbridge – report

Ms. O’Hare has three expired quotes, and she will confirm new quotes and confer with Commissioner Saunders on the lumber quote. Ms. O’Hare stated that some money was voted by the Commission in December from the Open Space Management Fund. The contractor will be paid to put it in, but the Commission will cover the lumber cost. See Motion voted tonight at 2.H.7. below. The plan is that the Stewards will take out the old footbridge. *Commissioner Lendler asked that the Trail Committee would help on this work party. She will plan this work party and notify Chair Miller of the date and time.*

4. Kiosk signage – additional language and map pedestal

Vice Chair Lathrop has two wood frames plus plexiglass to install. Each frame extension will be mounted as a wing to the kiosk and will show a larger trail map of Tyler Mill—no pedestal.

5. Other reports.

Chair Miller will attend Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Miller’s meeting of the Tyler Mill Users Group later this month. Ms. O’Hare said she learned that the original “Open Space Users Group” has been renamed to avoid confusion.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Peninsula by southern parking area entrance – No report.

2. Trail stone dust restoration & storm Ida trail bed damage – update – No report.

3. Dogwood tree replacement – No report.

4. Aquatic invasive plant – request for study

Ms. O’Hare stated that in January she did request that the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station study the invasives at Galko Pond in Fresh Meadows—no cost to the Town. They are going to do the study in June. The cost to eradicate invasives later on may come from the Open Space Resource Management Fund.

5. Other - See the Motion voted and approved pertaining to Fresh Meadows Open Space after the discussion of Item H. Use of FY 21-22 Professional Services – Natural Resources funds below.

C. 205 Main Street open space property

1. Trespass fencing – update

No fence has been put up. *Chair Miller will talk with Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis.*

D. Beseck Meadows

1. Bamboo – cutting & private encroachment by bamboo – update
This encroachment remains.
2. Access road erosion, minor dumping, vegetation by gate
No change.

E. Beseck Mountain

1. Cliffside Drive trail – restrict ATVs – update. No report.
2. Yard waste dumping. No report.

F. Pragemann Park – fence repair

Ms. O’Hare will ask with Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels on the status of fence repair. Ms. O’Hare said that volunteers from Burns & MacDonnell contacted her and will clean-up litter at Pragemann Park for Earth Day.

G. Grieb Trail/Spring Lake open space property – report, staff

Ms. O’Hare summarized the multi-layered issues at this site.

H. Use of FY 21-22 Professional Services – Natural Resources funds

Concerning this Account, Commissioners considered Items 1-7 below and voted the Motion below.

1. Proactive studies to support future grant application opportunities
2. (No item.)
3. Management of Conservation Areas adjacent to farmland lease areas – vendors
Commissioner Saunders is working on this task now.
4. Turtle Protection Plan
5. Bog Bridge Construction/Installation
6. Benches
7. Other

Commissioner Lendler suggested planting trees again where trees were blown away in the 2018 microburst. Commissioner Borne asked for arborvitae between Cheshire Trail and the road and evergreens or bayberry bushes to edge out the mugwort at Fresh Meadows. Chair Miller recommended native arborvitae that is deer resistant. Commissioner Lendler asked for decorative native trees by the Tyler Mill Preserve entrances.

Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to spend \$3,500 of the \$6,000 in the FY 21-22 Professional Services Natural Resources funds for materials for the Bog Bridge at Tyler Mill Preserve and to spend the remaining \$2,500 for trees or bushes to be planted at Fresh Meadows Open Space; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.

Ms. O'Hare will ask the contractor(s) to plant and water what they install, especially in July and August, and to get a one-year warranty on trees. Ms. O'Hare suggested using boulders in between the trees and putting deer protection. New plantings should be installed away from road salt and from mowing activity, and Ms. O'Hare will write to inform Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis about these related concerns.

Ms. O'Hare and Commissioner Borne will go out to measure and draw a plan for Erin to then obtain the three quotes needed. Ms. O'Hare will coordinate the timing of the plantings.

I. Bluebird Nesting Boxes – installations & locations

Ms. O'Hare reported that Commissioner Arsenault checked and cleaned the existing boxes. Ms. O'Hare has six more boxes, and she asked for suggestions of where to place them on a post or a fence pole. Commissioner Pyskaty suggested using ABS pipe over installed posts to prevent animals from climbing up and harming the birds. Chair Miller suggested putting boxes on the Stevens property when it is acquired by the Town.

J. Other properties

Ms. O'Hare will ask Public Works to repair potholes at the Tamarac Swamp entrance to Tyler Mill Preserve.

Entrance to Tyler Mill Preserve - At the Tyler Mill Preserve Maltby Lane entrance there is a gate lock issue, which Parks and Recreation Department will resolve.

3. PROPERTY MONITORING – APRIL REPORTING

A. Bertini Park – J. Lathrop

This will be discussed in May.

B. Beseck Meadow – M. Miller

This will be discussed in May.

C. Cliffside Drive – C. Arsenault. No report.

D. Tyler Mill Preserve – D. Saunders & D. Lendler

This report is tabled to the May agenda.

Commissioner Pyskaty will report on Ferguson Woods in May. Commissioner McQueen will report on the Cooke property in May. Commissioners Lathrop, Miller, Arsenault, Saunders, and Lendler will also report in May.

4. BUDGET FY 22-23

A. Proposed Professional Services – Natural Resources expenditure

Ms. O'Hare will be proposing an Ecological Study of the Stevens property habitats for use of FY 22-23 funds.

B. Public Hearing on Proposed Budget, Council Chambers, April 11, 6:00 p.m. Noted. Ms. O'Hare attended and reported there were no questions for her from the public.

C. Town Council Budget Hearing (Conservation Commission), Council Chambers, April 28, 6:30 p.m. Noted.

5. TRAIL COMMITTEE REPORT, J. Lathrop
Vice Chair Lathrop had no action to report.

6. COMMITTEE ROLES

Chair Miller requested that a short paragraph that describes each Committee is to be submitted at the May meeting, identifying the substance of the work, goals, issues, and Committee roles. Already, Commissioner Lendler submitted her list of goals and her assessment of what is needed. Ms. O'Hare cautioned that, if the needed work is too difficult for the Committee, then it might be hired out.

Commissioner Borne will write about the role for the new "Land Acquisition Committee".

Commissioner McQueen asked to see the Conservation Commission's Annual Report 2021. He recalled a Zoom meeting with Lyman Hall High School Agricultural students in which the role of the Conservation Commission was described to them.

Chair Miller will inform Commissioner Saunders about the discussion in regard to the Farmland Lease Committee.

7. PROJECTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Chair Miller will receive names and contact information of interested volunteers and pair them with tasks for parks and Open Space properties. Chair Miller also asked for a Commissioner to be the Volunteer Coordinator. Commissioner Lendler has a list of persons who are willing to help.

8. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee

1. Compliance with lease terms – No report.
2. Conservation management by contractors – No report.

Chair Miller stated that Commissioner Arsenault and Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis will consult on B-E:

B. Field 1A, No. Branford Rd. – conservation maintenance issue

C. Field 1C & 1D, No. Branford Rd. – vehicle trespass issue

D. Field 7A, Northford Rd. – hunter parking proposal

E. Fields 7B, 7C, 7D, off Anderson Rd. – gate

F. Field 18A, 995 C East Center St. – Eversource Transmission Upgrade Project

Ms. O’Hare had no report, but she will ask Commissioner Arsenault to report.

G. Other – Commissioner Pyskaty reported that a fire occurred recently on a private property adjacent to Field 4C. Some of the blaze blew over onto 4C and burned about one third of the field. The Wallingford Fire Department and area responders contained it and put it out.

Ms. O’Hare reported that Commissioner Saunders informed her that Mr. Warren Williams had died recently. *Ms. O’Hare will send a card to his family on behalf of the Conservation Commission.*

9. OFFICIAL OPEN SPACE MAP – review revised/updated map

Ms. O’Hare showed this revised map. Mr. Dave Smith in the Engineering Department had added all the Wallingford Land Trust properties to the map. Also, Commissioner Saunders had wanted this revision to be coordinated with the Open Space and Parks Database that was compiled by former Town Planner Linda Bush. Ms. O’Hare said some of those database numbers are entered on this map now. *Ms. O’Hare will get this revised map copied by the Engineering Department and then provide copies to the Commissioners, along with the database, for their review at the next meeting.*

10. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Climate change relative to recent grant application & CT Preservation Trust zoom, staff

Ms. O’Hare reported briefly on the significance of this Zoom program and the Stevens grant as well.

B. Open Space Resources Management Fund – account status, staff

To be discussed in May.

C. Farm River Greenway – notice, staff. Received.

D. CFPA magazine, CT Woodlands, Winter 2022 – Noted.

E. CT Farmland Trust, news alert re: webinars, “Ask An Expert” (forwarded to Commission via email) – Received. These webinars are via YouTube. Ms. O’Hare described the March 17 webinar on Climate Change in Connecticut. It demonstrated their belief that “Farmland is the Key to Mitigating Climate Change.” She recommends seeing these webinars.

F. CT Association of Wetlands Scientists (Virtual) Conference, 3/9/22 (notice forwarded to Commission via email) – staff report. Ms. O’Hare noted she attended this conference.

G. CT Botanical Society – 2022 Spring Meeting, Sat., Apr. 16, 9:30 a.m., Haddam, CT – Noted.

H. DEEP magazine, CT Wildlife, January/February 2022; received 3/29/22 – Received.

I. CT Association of Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc. (CACIWC) –

magazine, *The Habitat*, Winter 2022, (digital/on website); email notice received 3/29/22.
Ms. O'Hare pointed out that this excellent magazine is only available now in digital format.

J. CFPA magazine, *CT Woodlands*, Spring 2022, received 3/29/22

K. CFPA newsletter, *Rock, Root & Trail*, Mar. 2022, received 3/31/22

11. NEXT MEETING – May 12, 2022

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Borne to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Pyskaty, and approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary