

Final / Approved

MINUTES

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, July 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, July 14, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 315 of Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford.

Present: Chair Mike Miller, Vice Chair John Lathrop, and Commissioners Dianne Saunders, Carl Arsenault, Brad Sammis, James Pyskaty, Jared McQueen (arrived as noted), and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare.

Absent: Commissioners Jeffrey Borne and Dianne Lendler.

Also present were three persons from the public as noted below.

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting, June 9, 2022

Corrections proposed were:

- p. 2, at 2.A.2.a., sentence 1, to add after "materials" in parentheses "(specify to use black locust and white oak because those last longer and the grain is easier to work with)";
- p. 4 at 4., sentence 1 should say: "Chair Lathrop said that he and Commissioner Lendler had cut down a tree in Bertini Park."

Motion was made by Vice Chair Lathrop to accept the Minutes of the June 9, 2022 Meeting as amended; seconded by Commissioner Sammis, and approved by Commissioners Miller, Lathrop, Saunders, Arsenault, Sammis, and Pyskaty.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

The Stewards continue with their various projects such as removal of stricken and dead trees. Commissioner Saunders said that the beechleaf nematode has proliferated within Tyler Mill, running from tree roots up to canopy and causing beech tree decline. Striated leaves appeared and whole trees are affected since last year. Herbaceous trails (Red, Lilac, Yellow South, Red South) are especially

affected. Ms. O'Hare raised the question of color coding for bike trails, with the expectation that the Commission would blaze trails. *Chair Miller will discuss this with Trails Administrator Mr. Kenny Michaels.*

Commissioner McQueen entered the meeting at 6:09 p.m.

2. Proposals to Trails Administrator
 - a. Green Trail footbridge
 - b. Boy Scout Trail

Both of these proposals, which were made in June to Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels, Director of Parks and Recreation Department, were discussed by the Conservation Commission at the June meeting. Chair Miller had communicated the Commission's comments to Mr. Michaels.

b. In regard to the Boy Scout Trail proposal, Ms. O'Hare as Environmental Planner did send review comments to Trails Administrator Michaels. She had asked that the Boy Scout Trail be constructed against the stone wall and not through the hay field, which would affect the farmer lessee. Also, a "No Parking" sign should be placed the gate.

The proposal stated that Steward Scott Gray and Mr. Joe Robles are assigned to blaze the Boy Scout Trail. *Chair Miller will suggest to Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels that the Conservation Commission should supervise the blazing or re-blazing of trails.*

a. For the Green Trail footbridge, Ms. O'Hare as Environmental Planner advised Mr. Michaels that, when the last footbridge was done, a Wetlands Permit was applied for and issued. An application would have to be filed by July 26 in order to be acted on by IWWC on September 7. Ms. O'Hare had shown Mr. Michaels the Conservation Commission's discussion points from the June 9th Minutes when they met to discuss a Wetlands application.

Commissioner Saunders noted the vernal pool at the end of the proposed footbridge here, which Ms. O'Hare said must be put on the proposed work map. Mr. Michaels said that he will meet with those of the Tyler Mill Group that have carpentry knowledge. It was noted that the boards may split if the bridge is not crowned correctly.

At Commissioner Saunders' suggestion, Ms. O'Hare will share as background with Trails Administrator Michaels the Connecticut Forest & Parks Association document, the Ferrucci & Walicki document, and the U.S. Forest Service document on proper footbridge design and construction that were provided originally to the original vendor who was going to build and install this footbridge.

3. Contracted work – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare stated how the \$6,000 in the Commission's budget at the end of FY 21-22 was expended, as follows:

- Mr. Eric Hansen of Ferrucci & Walicki was contracted to GPS the unauthorized trail that was cut along the east side of Tyler Mill Preserve, and to provide GIS mapping. Cost \$750.00.

- Under FY 22-23, Ms. O'Hare issued a contract for Mr. Hansen to evaluate the unauthorized trail that was made on the east side of Tyler Mill Preserve, in order for the Commissioners to decide how to manage the changes made on that trail. This report should be received by the August meeting. Cost \$750.00. *Chair Miller asked the Commissioners to walk this area to see its condition.* This report is to include the water easement that runs under this area at Field 7E and private property nearby. Also nearby is the blind road corner for traffic, and the Town will be replacing a culvert at the Northford Road bridge. Right now, people have to cross Northford Road there on foot. *Ms. O'Hare will relay all of this.*

- At Tyler Mill Preserve: A contract to Mr. Bob Baker to eradicate invasive vegetation by mechanical removal. Cost \$750.00.

- Ms. O'Hare stated another bench was purchased for Fresh Meadows.

- Chair Miller said the remainder of the 2021-22 purchases were completed by Commissioner Saunders for tick spray and hornet spray for volunteers who work at Tyler Mill and various tools and supplies.

- Ms. O'Hare reported on the FY 21-22 contract with Professor Dennis Quinn, herpetologist. *The Commissioners' consensus was not to do any further work on this topic at this time.*

- Ms. O'Hare described another contract for mechanical work soon at Tyler Mill Preserve to remove vegetation to gain access to Trees of Heaven. Some mature trees will be going to seed soon, making TOH babies in a 600-foot area. Commissioners wanted to know if chemicals would be used to kill the roots. *Commissioners Arsenault and Saunders will assist in directing the contractor.* Ms. O'Hare said that Trees of Heaven removal also might be done at Fresh Meadows at the same time.

4. Other reports – None.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Aquatic invasive plant survey, Galko Pond

Ms. O'Hare said the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station was supposed to do this Aquatic Survey in June, and she will check on it.

2. Status: kiosk, footbridge, bench installation, second bench location

Ms. O'Hare went out there with Director of Public Works Rob Baltramaitis last week. The bench that was removed by the Erratic Boulder will be installed by Public Works on the Butterfly Trail. Also, Public Works will install a boulder at the edge of the parking lot as planned. Ms. O'Hare asked that the old kiosk at Fresh Meadows could be restored, and Mr. Baltramaitis suggested to use Lexan instead of Plexiglass. Ms. O'Hare suggested that the items inside the kiosk should be evaluated and perhaps replaced and that the kiosk should be lower for ADA folks and kids. *Vice Chair Lathrop will*

check on the durability of the existing kiosk. Ms. O'Hare stated that Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels assisted by paying the freight cost for the bench she purchased.

As to the footbridge reported damaged, Vice Chair Lathrop believed it could be saved. He reinstalled the stringer and angle braces going to the stake in the ground. Ms. O'Hare recommended that the new bench be placed on the Cheshire Trail toward the Cuneo property. Public Works Director Baltramaitis will have the two benches installed in October.

3. Contracted work – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare said the contractor, Mr. Bob Baker, had removed three clumps of knotweed. Public Works personnel took it away.

4. Other – None.

C. Beseck Meadow

1. Bamboo – cutting, treatment, & private encroachment by bamboo

Chair Miller said the DPW cut bamboo on Town land but the bamboo is still spreading on private property abutting here. Ms. O'Hare showed a photo.

2. Access road erosion, minor dumping, vegetation by gate.

Ms. O'Hare reported this remains the same.

3. Pedestrian access – maintenance

Commissioner Arsenault reported he cleared vegetation away from the pedestrian accessway by the gate, as requested to do so by Ms. O'Hare.

D. 1364 Scard Road & 40 Geo. Washington Trail – signage

The signposts may have wood rot. *Vice Chair Lathrop will check it.*

E. Ferguson Woods

1. Contracted work – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare issued an end-of-year contract for \$750 to Mr. Anthony Zemba of Landtech to assess the pond at Ferguson Woods. She e-mailed his report to the Commissioners. *Chair Miller will pursue kiosks with DEEP.* Ms. O'Hare may issue another \$750 contract for Mr. Zemba to complete a supplemental report on the pond. Chair Miller noted that the Commission would need the Tree Warden's approval to remove the problem tree damming flow. *Chair Miller and Vice Chair Lathrop will see that tree and make a recommendation. Ms. O'Hare will copy the pond report to the Water Division because this is in the Spring Brook area.* Vice Chair Lathrop said cement blocks are in the way. *Ms. O'Hare will ask Public Works to move the blocks aside, clear the downed trees for access, and mow the entrance. Commissioner Arsenault will mow the homestead area.*

2. Kiosk proposal

Commissioners agreed to put a kiosk at the Dibble Edge Road trail entrance. Commissioner Arsenault will call the State office about types of kiosks. Ms. O'Hare will bring information on ready-made or kit kiosks.

F. Harry O. Haakonsen Fishway/Quinnipiac River – Contracted work – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare issued an end-of-year contract for \$750 to Quinnipiac River Advocates, led by State Representative Mary Mushinsky, to create a brochure for the public. Years ago, the DEEP had built the fishway opposite the Times Fiber Communications property to ease upriver access for anadromous fish. Representative Mushinsky joined the meeting at 7:15 p.m. She showed the draft brochure, which will have a QR code link to see the DEEP video about the waterway and to see species using the fishway, etc. Actually, fish runs are declining. Reasons could be predation by the growing striped bass population, or perhaps it could be drought related when there is not enough water to climb up. A USGS river gauge report is available for Smartphones. Chair Miller said that, typical to all rivers in Connecticut, predator lamprey, which feed on ocean fish, are increasing and river herring and alewives are dropping off. Commissioner Arsenault said the Sound is getting warmer by climate change and birds are predators. Chair Miller thought this draft is good.

Regarding use conflicts at Tyler Mill Preserve, Representative Mushinsky noted that various uses and areas are protected by State regulations in State parks, and perhaps there would be similar regulation at the town level.

Mrs. Laurel Van Stone said that she is interested in conservation and a community Sustainability designation, such as other towns have earned. That is not yet a project here. Mrs. Van Stone left the meeting at this time.

G. FY 22-23 Prof. Services - Natural Resources – Contracted work & proposed work

Ms. O'Hare said that contracts are going in FY 22-23 to Eric Hansen, Bob Baker, and Anthony Zemba of Landtech for continuation of FY 21-22 type of work.

Ms. O'Hare said one contract will go to Mr. Todd Mervash to do knotweed removal at Fresh Meadows Open Space and possibly at Tyler Mill Preserve. Commissioner Saunders saw knotweed in the tributary there.

Another contract may go for work on a sandplains kiosk brochure and kiosk. Such an area is difficult to preserve, but Ms. O'Hare heard of an organization in Massachusetts that is planting grass plugs in sandplains there.

H. Other properties

Ms. O'Hare told about another contract which may go out for a kiosk at Doolittle Park by Wharton Brook near Wall Street. It will contain information on the floodplain, the brook, and riparian plants.

Ms. O'Hare is planning to contract for ecological evaluations of the newly acquired Stevens

property. Commissioner Saunders suggested that the Audubon organization could do breeding bird surveys there and herpetology studies.

3. PROPERTY MONITORING REPORTS

A. Fresh Meadows – J. Borne. No report.

B. Marcus Cooke – J. McQueen

Commissioner McQueen said he had walked all the trails before the foliage came out. He found them in pretty good condition. At the fence by the tennis court at Southwind, he saw some trail bike marks but none on the steep parts.

Soon, Commissioner McQueen will cut back brush at the Purple Trail. He advocated making that an official trail. Chair Miller said he and other Commissioners will walk it.

C. Cooke Road property – D. Saunders

This property is still not mowed. *Commissioner Saunders will ask the new lessee to mow now, and then the Town should go in after the mowing to make a walkable path for the public.* Minor dumping seen can be removed by DPW after the mowing. But goldenrod should be in there from November to January, serving the Monarch butterfly migration.

D. Whirlwind Hill Rd. / Scard Rd. – D. Lendler. No report.

4. TRAIL COMMITTEE REPORT – J. Lathrop. No report.

5. PROJECTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Chair Miller learned from the Choate Rosemary Hall representative that they are organizing students for a Volunteer Day on Friday, September 30, 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. *Chair Miller asked Commissioners to consider doing a climate project or an open space project with the students for three to four hours.* Ideas were: taking a walk at Fresh Meadows to see invasives; doing a project at Ferguson Woods; and using shovels and buckets to clean out vegetation on Field 7F. *Chair Miller will respond to the Choate representative and will e-mail to Commissioner Saunders for planning. Commissioner Saunders will provide instructions, and some Commissioners and some Stewards at Tyler Mill may assist. Chair Miller will contact Representative Mushinsky about possible trail or river tasks as well.*

6. PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAMMING

A. Public informational materials – wall rack (brochures, program sheets, maps & notices)

Ms. O'Hare plans to fill the new Lucite wall rack outside the Environmental Planner's area.

B. Information at library, Parks & Recreation Dept. & other locations

Ms. O'Hare asked Commissioners to assist on these townwide distributions later on. Vice Chair Lathrop said the library has maps of Tyler Mill right now.

C. Website information

Ms. O'Hare brought up whether the Program Planning Department could create a Web page on the Conservation Commission and its projects. *Ms. O'Hare or Chair Miller will speak to Mayor Dickinson about this possibility.*

Commissioner Pyskaty left the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

7. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee

1. Monitoring Reports – status

Chair Saunders said that reports are due from Commissioners Borne, Sammis, and Arsenault.

Chair Saunders reported that at both Beseck Meadow and Maltby Lane persons have cut locks off gates for access.

At Field 8B Northford Road, the farmer lessee said he will measure the damaged gate and give that measurement to Chair Saunders. Then Ms. O'Hare will act accordingly on the gate.

Chair Saunders stated that Fields 7BCD Anderson Road needs a new gate as well.

2. Review of compliance with lease terms – No discussion.

3. Conservation management by contractors

Watering must be done at various locations. *Ms. O'Hare will ask landscapers to water the tupelo trees at Field 8B, and Ms. O'Hare will ask the Water Division if hydrant access is possible here.*

Commissioner McQueen left the meeting at 8:15 p.m., and the gentleman from the public left at this time.

B. Several recent trespass issues & signage – Not discussed.

C. Field 1C & 1D, No. Branford Rd. – vehicle trespass issue – Not discussed.

D. Field 7A, Northford Road – hunter parking proposal in R.O.W. & vehicle trespass – Not discussed.

E. Fields 7B, 7C, 7D, off Anderson Rd. – gate – Not discussed.

8. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

A. 264 Williams Road – grant requirements

Ms. O'Hare said the Law Department is working on the Town's compliance with State grant requirements so that the Town can move ahead and purchase the Stevens property.

B. 124 Liney Hall Lane – update

The Town Council voted this week to purchase this five-acre property that is adjacent to the Stevens property above.

9. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Memorandum to Town Commissions from Janis Small, Corporation Counsel,

Re: Freedom of Information Act Requirements, dated 5/9/22. This item was tabled until the next meeting agenda.

B. Hazard Mitigation Plan Update – South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) – Survey – received 6/30/2022

Ms. O'Hare stated that Wallingford has a Hazard Mitigation Plan. The SCRCOG group will be updating its plan in January with a consultant. Topics include natural hazards, member town projects, and related information. *Ms. O'Hare will insert the SCRCOG website survey link on the next Conservation Commission agenda.* SCRCOG is seeking public input on this survey. State Representative Mary Mushinsky endorsed this Plan Update.

Representative Mushinsky left the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

C. Contact Sheet – Some changes were made tonight.

D. CT Farmland Trust – Scavenger Hunts event notice

Ms. O'Hare distributed copies tonight.

E. Sustainable CT – newsletter, *Actions & Impacts*, 7/6/22. Noted.

F. CFPA Supporters – newsletter, *Rock, Root & Trail*, received 7/1/22. Noted.

G. CFPA – magazine, *CT Woodlands*, Summer 2022. Noted.

H. CT Butterfly Association – Newsletter, Summer 2022. Noted.

I. Memberships – status

Ms. O'Hare has paid all current memberships under the FY 21-22 budget on behalf of the Commission.

J. DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program Grant – application deadline, 9/30/22. This date was announced by Ms. O'Hare.

10. NEXT MEETING – August 11, 2022

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Sammis to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Arsenault, and approved unanimously by Commissioners Miller, Lathrop, Saunders, Arsenault, and Sammis.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns, Recording Secretary