

Final / Approved

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Thursday, July 11, 2019

MINUTES

Present: Chair Mary Heffernon, Commissioners Jeffrey Borne, Brad Sammis, Dianne Lendler, Dianne Saunders, and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare. Commissioners Jared McQueen, Mike Miller and Vice-Chair John Lathrop arrived as noted. No one attended from the public.

Not Present: Carl Arsenault.

Chair Heffernon called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. in Town Hall Room 116.

1. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting, June 13, 2019

Commissioner Jared McQueen arrived at 7:05 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Borne to approve the Minutes of June 13, 2019, with the following amendments: At 2.B.1. Fresh Meadows, regarding Tessa's Trail, that "Carl Arsenault, Mary Heffernon, Lena Nicolai, Joe Scanio and his son Zeb, and a Choate senior had blazed Tessa's Trail." At 2.C. Ferguson Woods to state that "The geocache has been removed by the person who installed it." At 5.A. Open Space Users Group Meeting, May 15 – report, to amend sentence 4 to read: "A Police Department representative indicated Tyler Mill and all Town parks open at 4 a.m. officially." and to delete the rest of that sentence and the entire next sentence; seconded by Commissioner McQueen, and approved unanimously as amended.

2. Property Management

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Saunders saw on the Green Trail at the steep hill on the way to the footbridge, that people have abraded the log with motorbikes. Also, the illegal Purple Trail has been cut open and cut back. Invasives are growing above the basalt traprock, probably since the storm in 2018. The Commission had closed off the purple trail in early June, and from June 4 to 30 this has occurred. Far under a thicket, she reported one Mile-a-Minute plant, highly invasive. It is 6 feet long with perfectly triangular leaves and rounded cups on the stem with tiny backward barbs. She reported that Dr. Chia at the CT Agricultural Station said the same invasive is in the Eversource right-of-way by Pond Hill School and instances of strange invasives are more common this year due to the rainy spring and later winds.

Commissioner Mike Miller arrived at 7:13 p.m.

Chair Heffernon forwarded a copy of the Town ordinance about unleashed dogs and feces removal to the Nuisance Officer but has not heard back yet. People still have their dogs off leash at Tyler Mill.

2. Professional Services – Natural Resources – FY18-19

Ms. O'Hare updated the Commissioners on end-of-year expenses. Under the Open Space Resource Management account she obtained the mowing of Field 7E on Northford Road (\$650.00) and graffiti

removal from the glacial erratic at Fresh Meadows (\$295.00). She reported the Mayor indicated that funds can accrue year to year by action of the Town Council.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Trees of Heaven eradication

Erin O'Hare said the Parks and Recreation Department gave permission to cut vegetation by the glacial erratic. *Commissioners Lathrop, Heffernon and Sanders said they will help with this work.*

2. Trail map

Erin O'Hare said the trail map was updated per the Commissioners' June comments. The map will be enlarged and installed in the Fresh Meadows kiosk. Commissioners agreed not to provide individual maps at the kiosk. *Dianne Saunders said the Fresh Meadows kiosk needs to be stained and she will do it after the two Tyler Mill Preserve kiosks are done.*

Commissioner Lendler recommended blazing the Tyler Mill Preserve Orange Trail as a safety measure for the horses and riders.

3. Graffiti removal.

As above, graffiti was removed from the glacial erratic during June.

4. Road drainage undermining Cheshire Road Trail.

Ms. O'Hare said she requested that Town Engineer Rob Baltramaitis or the Assistant Town Engineer would go out and look at this situation.

C. Metal detecting activities

Members agreed that no one is supposed to dig or remove any objects on or off the trails. The Town has the power to regulate activities on Town lands. *Commissioner Saunders will research more in the State regulations.*

D. Other properties.

Commissioner Miller indicated he has not installed the bluebird boxes but will do that at Beseck Meadow.

3. Farmland Lease Properties Program

A. Field 4C, Whirlwind Hill Rd./Scard Rd. – mowing, soil testing, eradication of Autumn olive in hedgerow

Commissioner John Lathrop arrived at 7:52 p.m.

Commissioner Lendler said Field 4C has a driveway, which the neighbor has mowed. Also, the gate leading to Scard Road is not usable because of dumping there. The neighbor talked to her about the Autumn olive in there, while the rest is weeds and not mowed. Commissioner Saunders said Field 4C is about four acres with a huge slope; topsoil washed down long ago, and the soil is poor. The Town was mowing it as bird habitat. Ms. O'Hare said a lessee or the Town could be asked to mow it again.

Commissioner Saunders reported that the lessee of Field 4A, 1390 Whirlwind Hill Road, and Field 19A, Whirlwind Hill Road and Scard Road, has not maintained the fields, has no livestock in the fields, and now someone has removed fencing on the north side of Field 19A. The Commission

agreed to terminate the lease due to “failure to farm”. Commissioner Saunders indicated the lessee purchased the gate and can take it. The Town can install temporary wire to close the fence line. *Ms. O’Hare will begin the termination process, as requested, and will ask Public Works to install the wire protection.*

Motion by Commissioner Saunders to put three fields being Field 4C, if the lease is terminated, out to lease for perennial crops, and 4A and 19A out to lease for pasture; seconded by Commissioner Miller, and approved unanimously.

Ms. O’Hare will contact the Law Department about termination protocol. Commissioner Saunders offered to draft a new bid document if the three fields go out to bid.

B. 1240 Whirlwind Hill Rd. – mowing report, C. Arsenault & D. Lendler

Commissioner Lendler said that 1240 Whirlwind Hill Road is behind Mr. Termini’s house. She wrote her report about this property and submitted it by email previously. It is getting overgrown. The Town owns it. *Commissioner Saunders will look at it regarding management options.*

C. Field 5A, 300 Cooke Road

Ms. O’Hare said the lessee has not made use of his lease, and the invasive Scotch thistle is spreading there. Ms. Saunders said the field is in fallow now, but it was in crops last year. The lessee always plants this field later in corn.

D. Field 1C, 300 North Branford Road

Ms. O’Hare said this field is solid fleabane now, and she suggested requiring mowing of fields before seeds are dispersed. *She will read the lease and contact the lessee about it.* Field 1B on North Branford Road has Autumn olive growing 4 to 8 feet high. Commissioner Saunders noted that maintenance of that field was put under the lease of Field 1C.

4. Executive Session

A. Executive Session pursuant to CT General Statutes Sections 1-225(f) and 1-200(6)(D) regarding real estate

Chairman Heffernon indicated this item would not be taken up tonight.

5. Other Topics

A. POCD Implementation Committee – report, M. Heffernon

Chair Heffernon explained that the Conservation Commission is responsible for its part of the implementation of the Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development. The Commission can educate other Town bodies and citizens by: promoting locally grown foods and the Community Garden; educating property owners on land management techniques; educating the public on management of open space, and explaining to the Town Council the benefits of having open space versus having more development.

Chair Heffernon did not attend this recent Committee meeting, but she wrote a report to the

Committee. *Chair Heffernon will send her Committee report out to the members.* Commissioners suggested ideas to start or to publicize: the Cook Hill School vegetable garden, promotion of Town farms and possibly a bike tour, telling owners how to bring birds into their yards, teaching about

3

invasive plants, speakers for public programs, plant give-away days, etc. *The Commission will continue this discussion in August.*

B. Recent expenses

Ms. O'Hare said Mayor Dickinson authorized FY 18-19 expenditures from the Open Space Resources Management Fund for these items: "No horses allowed" signage; reimbursement to Dianne Saunders for lumber and signs, saw chains and oil; and reimbursement to Steward Scott Gray for chain saw-related expenses. A cordless hedge trimmer and extra batteries were paid for under the Conservation Commission Office Supplies account.

6. Reports/Correspondence

A. CT Farmland Trust. Several email news items were acknowledged.

B. Choate Rosemary Hall – Environmental Sustainability Project, Oct. 4, 2019

Commissioner Miller suggested doing a Plan of Conservation and Development project with the Choate students. Discussion on this was deferred until the August meeting.

C. CT Butterfly Association newsletter, Summer 2019, was received.

7. Next Meeting – August 8, 2019. The Commissioners' contact sheet was updated for all.

8. Adjournment.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary

