

Final / Approved

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Thursday, August 8, 2019

MINUTES

Present: Chair Mary Heffernon, Commissioners Jeffrey Borne, Dianne Lendler, Jared McQueen, Dianne Saunders, Brad Sammis and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare. Commissioners Mike Miller and Carl Arsenault arrived as noted.

Not Present: Vice-Chair John Lathrop.

Chair Heffernon called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in Town Hall Room 116.

1. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting, July 11, 2019

Motion by Commissioner Sammis to approve the minutes of July 11, 2019, as presented; 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 saw that the DEEP had put their purple "Trout" signs where stocking was done. One sign is missing at the bridge, and she called DEEP to place it.

Commissioner Mike Miller arrived at 7:05 p.m.

Commissioner Saunders said that every three weeks the trail from Maltby to the Green/Blue trail is overgrown with bristled knotweed. The Commissioners need better tools plus prevention strategies. The cut plant material is voluminous. With 15 miles of trails, sustainability is key.

Commissioner Carl Arsenault arrived at 7:10 p.m.

Commissioner Saunders saw new plants after the storm. The Commission's cordless hedge trimmer is good on harder growth, and weedwackers are good on softer weeds. Commissioner Borne suggested planting fast-growing tree clusters, such as paper tulip, to shade both sides of the trail. Commissioner Saunders reported seeing dumping there four times in one week.

2. Erosion areas – D.Saunders

Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare wrote a memo requesting Department of Public Works to look at erosion from Maltby Lane down to the bridge. Commissioner Saunders said the gate at Maltby Lane was left open by the farmer, and she put a padlock on it. She called Public Works to secure the lock and fix the chain.

3. Signage

Chair Heffernon suggested signs warning that if dogs are off leash, the owners could be fined \$92.00 per violation. The Commissioners agreed. Commissioner Saunders said that seven signs are needed. Chair Heffernon will ask if the Traffic Division can post these signs.

4. Eradication of Japanese knotweed

Motion by Commissioner Saunders to have Todd Mervosh treat Japanese knotweed by spraying now in August, preferably before sunset, at the two entrances to Tyler Mill Preserve and at two other spots along Northford Road, up to a cost of \$300.00; seconded by Commissioner Lendler, and approved by Commissioners Saunders, Lendler, Arsenault, Borne, McQueen and Miller. Chair Heffernon and Commissioner Sammis voted against this motion.

Commissioner Saunders said a trail post was broken, and Commissioner Arsenault will replace it.

Regarding Field 18A, Chair Heffernon said there is still purple loosestrife in the Eversource right-of-way. Ms. O'Hare said *Eversource was supposed to treat the invasives under the wires, so Ms. O'Hare will contact them again.*

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Trees of Heaven eradication

Chair Heffernon and Commissioners Saunders and Lathrop treated the Trees of Heaven. Only one is left.

2. Review of Trail System Map

Ms. O'Hare showed the June 12, 2019, finished map with the Commissioners' changes from the June meeting. Chair Heffernon thought the wheelchair-accessible port-o-let should be located on the map where it is actually located.

At the glacial erratic is another bench—the symbol is there, but the word “bench” should be printed by it. Also, Commissioners agreed to delete “Scenic View” in two places and to rename those “Meadow View”. The “Scenic Knoll” label can stay because that view is of Meriden and the cliffs. “Galko Pond” will keep that name.

3. Road drainage undermining Cheshire Road Trail

Town Engineer Rob Baltramaitis will look at this area at some point. *The property stewards will keep an eye on the amount of erosion.*

4. Erratic boulder – sapling removal

The saplings have been cut from in front of the erratic boulder. Commissioners agreed that the dead ash tree at the parking lot should be removed by Public Works. *Chair Heffernon will ask Public Works to see to this.*

5. Site conditions

Ms. O'Hare said the Town is doing a nice job on the trails. She has asked the Town to trim the tall canary grass in front of the bench by Galko Pond. In the Butterfly Meadow, Ms. O'Hare saw Scotch thistle. Also, Ms. O'Hare said the lavender plants are good. The mugwort in the trail should be pulled or cut, and stone dust should be put there.

C. Marcus Cooke – Trail maintenance

Commissioner McQueen cleared the Purple Trail of briars. *He will pick up the step-over branches in the trail.* Also, he asked to have boundary markers placed because people have dumped leaves into the ravine. Chair Heffernon said there are signs marking the Town Open Space. *Ms. O'Hare will get Commissioner McQueen a map from the Engineering Department.*

D. Ferguson Woods – weed trimming

Commissioners Saunders and Heffernon cleared weeds on the North Branford Road side of the Yellow Trail. They cleared mugwort, bittersweet, trumpet vine and forsythia.

E. Beseck Meadow - bluebird box installation, M. Miller

Commissioner Miller will do this.

F. Whirlwind Hill Rd., “Lot 1 – 1250 Whirlwind Hill Rd.”

1. Mowing Report - C. Arsenault & D. Saunders

Commissioner Saunders will give the mowing report in September.

2. Address Issue

Ms. O'Hare was not sure that this property address is accurate. She is checking with the Building Official who assigns road numbers.

G. Other properties – None discussed.

3. Farmland Lease Properties Program

A. Farmland Lease Committee – report, D. Saunders

The Committee of Dianne Saunders, Mike Miller, Carl Arsenault, Brad Sammis and Erin O'Hare met yesterday about the following agenda items. Ms. Saunders said the five-year leases are working out for the Conservation Commission and the lessees. The Town has a constant price on leases. Each committee member has field/lease monitoring duties once a year.

B. Field 1A, 300 No. Branford Rd. – conservation management area.

C. Field 1C, 300 No. Branford Rd. – conservation management area.

Field 1A and Field 1C were taken up together. Ms. O'Hare said these properties have the same lessee. Field 1C is particularly wet. *By a separate letter for each field, the Commissioners directed Ms. O'Hare to tell the lessee to mow that field once every one to three years, and that she should give three months' notice before mowing is required in November or March.*

D. Field 4A, 1394 Whirlwind Hill Rd. & Field 19A, 1351 Scard Rd.

1. Lease termination – This property needs to be cleaned. A new lease needs to be drafted. Chair Heffernon would like to see correct and consistent addresses for the Farmland Lease properties. Ms. O'Hare said the lessee's personal property was supposed to be removed. *Ms. O'Hare should write a letter to Corporation Counsel Janis Small about the non-use of Field 4A at 1394 Whirlwind Hill Road and Field 19A at 1351 Scard Road by the lessee as well as the nonpayment of the lease amounts overdue for the fields, being \$2,125 for 2018 and \$2,150 for 2019.*

2. Fence replacement – Ms. O'Hare said the fence is still down, but a Public Works employee should replace the fence soon.

3. Proposed bid – Not discussed.

E. Field 4C, Whirlwind Hill Rd./Scard Rd.

1. Proposal to transfer into Program & bid to renovate for hay or perennial crops. – Ms. O'Hare said the Farmland Lease Committee has proposed Field 4C for transfer into the Program. It will go out to bid after that.

2. Mowing – Public Works has mowed it, and an outside vendor has mowed it. Commissioner Saunders wanted to keep it mowed and not overgrown. The Commissioners' consensus was to have Ms. O'Hare ask Public Works to mow Field 4C anytime from this fall until February and remove the Autumn olive at the rear; otherwise, to have Ms. O'Hare hire someone to cut the Autumn olive hedgerow and chip up the debris via Open Space Management funds.

3. Eradication of Autumn olives in hedgerow – See E.2. above.

4. Soil testing – Not discussed.

F. Field 5A, Cooke Rd. – renewal proposal & conservation area mowing

This lease renewal is coming up for Field 5A on Cooke Road. Ms. O'Hare was out there today with the current lessee, who wants to renew. The lessee planted corn last week. He will treat the Scotch thistle.

G. Fields 6A & 6B, 200 Northford Rd. – conservation area mowing

Ms. O'Hare will show the lessee where the conservation areas are. This lease renewal is coming up.

H. Field 6D, 200 Northford Rd. – accessway mowing.

The lessee mowed the Field 6D accessway last week, per the lease.

I. Field 7F, Northford Rd. – renewal proposal **or** conservation area mowing

Ms. O'Hare said the lessee did not plant Field 7F last year or this year. Commissioner Saunders stated that the lessee does not want this lease anymore.

Regarding Field 7F, Ms. O'Hare wrote to the neighbor to cease encroachment by mowing, trespass vehicle activities and dumping of yard waste on this Field 7F. This renewal is not coming up. The Committee would like to draft a contract for this neighbor or someone from the public "to take care of Field 7F for conservation activities." Ms. O'Hare noted that this neighbor could be the paid vendor to cut Field 7F if he has the proper insurance. He mows it now with a shorter border, and butterflies are in there. *The Committee will meet again and ask this neighbor's interest in leasing.*

J. Field 8B, 80 Tyler Mill Rd. – proposed bid.

Commissioner Saunders said that Field 8B, a hay field, is going to be put out to bid.

For the September meeting, Ms. O'Hare will prepare a new Farmland Lease map for each Commissioner.

K. Other Fields - Field 20A, off Powder Hill Road, Durham

Commissioner Saunders said the lessee cannot get his truck and trailer across the culvert at Field 20A. Last time, he brought out 70 bales, one at a time. Can the Town or someone put a pipe in the culvert so the lessee can go in and out? Ms. O'Hare stated there was a fire on that hilltop last year, and the first responders had to walk up with water packs. Having a culvert and some cover to it would require a Wetlands permit.

Commissioner Miller asked Ms. O'Hare for a copy of this lease for Field 20A off Powder Hill Road in Durham to see the conservation management area versus the spread of Autumn olive. He said the current lessee did cut the Autumn olive back. Also, dead bamboo was cut and stacked.

4. Executive Session

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

Motion by Commissioner Sammis to go into Executive Session pursuant to CT General Statutes Sections 1-225(f) and 1-200(6)(D); seconded by Commissioner Miller, and approved unanimously.

The Commissioners entered Executive Session at 8:54 p.m. The Recording Secretary left the room. The Recording Secretary was called back into the room at 9:00 p.m.

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

Motion by Commissioner Miller to approve the report which was reviewed during Executive Session and to forward the report to Mayor Dickinson; seconded by Commissioner Sammis, and approved unanimously.

Chair Heffernon will sign the report as prepared by Commissioner Borne and then forward it to Mayor Dickinson.

5. Other Topics

A. POCD Implementation Committee – discussion of possible action initiatives

Chair Heffernon recommended education activities as one part of the Commission's response. State grants, Audubon, and kids' club activities were mentioned. Commissioner Lendler asked if there are any plans for the Conservation Commission to do something in connection with the Town's 350th anniversary. Commissioner Borne suggested doing a tree survey to identify the oldest tree(s) in Wallingford. State Representative Mary Mushinsky or the State Forestry Department could be a resource for that. *Ms. O'Hare mentioned the book on Connecticut's Notable Trees, and she will look for information.*

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

Ms. O'Hare suggested promoting "Pollinator Pathways" at this Choate event. Commissioners need to come up with a project for the Choate students for this event.

C. Pollinator Pathways

Chair Heffernon said such pathways cannot have pesticides applied to them and require all native plantings. Chair Heffernon is working with a student from the Vocational Science program to have Wallingford listed on the *PollinatorPathway.org* website.

D. Local farm program – *This will be planned for the spring.*

E. Other – *Commissioner Saunders said that Dr. Steinen, a geologist, may lead a ridge and swamp hike for the Conservation Commission and the public. She will obtain a date.*

6. Reports/Correspondence

A. CT Farmland Trust – email news was received.

B. DEEP magazine, CT Wildlife, May/June 2019 was received.

C. CT Butterfly Association – membership dues

Motion by Commissioner McQueen to direct Ms. O'Hare to pay \$25.00 as the "Contributor" level of Commission annual dues to the CT Butterfly Association; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.

D. CACCIWC – membership dues

Motion by Commissioner Miller to direct Ms. O'Hare to pay \$60.00 in annual dues to CACCIWC as the Conservation Commission's share, to join with other dues paid by the Inland Wetlands Commission; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.

E. Mayor's note – In a note from Mayor Dickinson, someone had inquired about possibly a giant hogweed being near Cook Hill School. Commissioners thought this was unlikely and referred the person's query to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.

F. Field 5A – *Ms. O'Hare will ask the Engineer Department to mark the northern boundary.*

7. Next Meeting – September 12, 2019 was noted. *Property reports are due from Commissioners Arsenault, Lathrop, Miller and Saunders.*

8. Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary