

Final / Approved

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

**Thursday, February 13, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Basement Conference Room, Town Hall
45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT**

MINUTES

Present: Chair Mary Heffernon, Vice Chair John Lathrop, Commissioners Carl Arsenault, Jeffrey Borne, Dianne Lendler, Jared McQueen, Mike Miller, Brad Sammis, and Dianne Saunders, and Environmental Planner Erin O’Hare.

Chair Heffernon called the Meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Regular Meeting, January 9, 2020

These corrections were made:

- p. 1 at 2.A.1., to add “Preserve” after “Stewards of Tyler Mill” in the heading. In the third sentence to add “rabid” before “raccoon”.
- p. 1 at 2.A.2., to restate these two sentences as “Chair Heffernon asked Commissioner Saunders if the Tyler Mill Road street sign was installed. Commissioner Saunders said it was not; also, the Green Trail signage is not installed yet.”
- p. 2 at 2.C.3., second and third sentences, Commissioner Saunders corrected to say, “Some markers are missing; some are bent back. The Stewards fixed some.”
- p. 3 at 4., the first sentence was corrected to state: *“Commissioner Saunders will get potential dates from the farmer for a meeting with herself and Chair Heffernon to plan the event.”*

Motion was made by Vice Chair Lathrop to accept the Minutes of January 9, 2020, as amended; seconded by Commissioner Lendler, and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Saunders left the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Lendler said all chainsaw work has been completed. Commissioner Lendler asked that one or more Commissioners would drive through Tyler Mill Preserve every day to monitor it. Chair Heffernon told the members that Steward Harry Hubbard passed away recently. Chair Heffernon has sent a condolence note to his son Dan, also a Steward, on behalf of the Commission.

Chair Heffernon said someone was attempting to kayak on one of the Farmland Lease fields. Director of Parks and Recreation Kenny Michaels told Chair Heffernon that Commissioners should use their own discretion on this. By regulation, public use of Farmland Lease fields is only permitted on the edge. A kayak would be difficult to control, and any such use should not be permitted.

2. Signage: street sign, no motorized vehicles sign & trail head signage

Chair Heffernon said the Tyler Mill street sign is up now, and the police added the “No Motorized Vehicles” sign to the street sign post. Vice Chair Lathrop showed the two signs he had made and routed for the Pink Trail. Chair Heffernon thanked him for doing this.

3. Maltby Lane erosion area

Ms. O’Hare, Environmental Planner, said this area needs help. The Maltby Lane runoff goes 35 feet into the field. *Ms. O’Hare will contact Public Works again about this issue. Also, Commissioner Lendler will go out there again to see if the cut trees are gone.*

4. Parks and Recreation brochure

Chair Heffernon reported that the Tyler Mill Preserve permit wording will be in the next brochure.

5. Other reports

Ms. O’Hare had asked RoKap, the contractor, about the “No Hunting Allowed on Saturday” sign. She reported that it will be fixed to say “Sunday” and put up soon.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Camera installation in south field

Commissioners Borne and Heffernon reported that the camera has been removed.

2. Japanese knotweed in south field

Commissioners Borne and Heffernon could not find Japanese knotweed in this field. Ms. O’Hare said it possibly was mowed down.

3. Private memorial request proposal letter

Ms. O’Hare said her office and the Mayor’s office had received a request letter with four proposals from the family. The family wants to put up a memorial for their loved one. A number of friends and relatives are supportive. *Ms. O’Hare will inform the family that there will be a meeting on this soon.*

C. Other properties

1. Cooke Road property – boundary & trespass issues

Ms. O’Hare reported on an encroachment issue that Commissioner Saunders had reported several months ago, which the Engineering Department had followed up on but found no issue. Ms. O’Hare conducted a site investigation and saw fresh equipment tracks, removal of fresh vegetation, and the sizeable encroachment area where hay is growing. Inspection of aerial photos indicates the clearing happened sometime between 1985 and 2001, with the hedgerow removal conducted sometime between 2001 and 2014. She showed maps. The Engineering Department is installing boundary markers this week. Ms. O’Hare spoke with the abutting farmer who had come into the office to inquire when Fields 4A and 19A were going to be leased. When asked, he admitted to using the Town’s property. She had told him that was not legal. Ms. O’Hare suggested the Commission consider leasing the land, perhaps with a bid waiver. It is 1.8 acre in size. Ms. O’Hare had consulted with the Law Department, who indicated a letter should be sent requesting that the farmer not enter the Town property—*which she will do.* Chair Heffernon requested the Farmland Lease Committee meet to confer about this issue.

2. Hope Hill Road area – incident - open space boundary markers removed

Ms. O'Hare said she has possession of these boundary markers. Ms. O'Hare notified Town Engineer Alison Kapushinski, and Ms. O'Hare will follow up with a memo asking Engineering to do a survey and repost these several open space properties. As requested by Chair Heffernon, Ms. O'Hare will ask police what the outcome with the students was.

3. Grand Street Park

Chair Heffernon said the Parks and Recreation Department has agreed that a Pollinator Garden could be planted in the soon-to-be renovated park, and the Boys and Girls Club director has said he is interested in youth from the club participating in the planting. Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, Audubon CT, will assist in the garden's design.

4. Quinnipiac River Trail Pollinator Garden

Chair Heffernon asked the Quinnipiac River Linear Trail Committee to see the Wallingford website. Mr. David Bedell, of the Trail Committee, said they are interested in planting a Pollinator Garden along the trail. Chair Heffernon said she is willing to help them with ideas for the garden.

5. Other – No topics.

3. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee – No report.

B. Proposed bids - Field 8B, Northford Rd.; Fields 4A & 19A, Whirlwind Hill Rd./Scard Rd.

Ms. O'Hare said the bid for Field 8B and for Fields 4A & 19A are not done. Ms. O'Hare will finish up the bid work.

C. Bid renewal – Field 5A, Cooke Rd. No report.

D. Proposed bid waiver - Field 18A, 995C E. Center St.

Ms. O'Hare will do map changes as requested by the Farmland Lease Committee.

E. RFQ Autumn olive tree removal - Field 4C, Whirlwind Hill Rd./Scard Rd.

Ms. O'Hare said that sumac and other things are growing among the Autumn olives, but she advised it is all right to remove the whole clump. Commissioners agreed. Commissioner Arsenault suggested doing second-year spraying of the sprouts and using a smaller rather than larger machine. Commissioner Lendler will look at this project as well. Ms. O'Hare will hold off on the RFQ for now.

F. Field 7A, Northford Rd. – hunter parking issue

It was stated that the present lessee does not want to renew the lease for Field 7A, so new bid packets should be sent out.

Ms. O'Hare reported a complaint from the property owner across from this field. There is mud tracking from hunters and others who drive down into the wet field. She suggested making a formal parking area there for hunters' use with a sign and having Public Works install telephone poles across the farm lane for now to keep all out of this field. Commissioner Lendler suggested more stone for the current pull-

off in the road right-of-way. A gate was also suggested. *Ms. O'Hare will get input from the Farmland Lease Committee and the Town Engineer on this.*

4. BUDGET FY20-21

Ms. O'Hare asked for project proposals for the Conservation budget for FY 2020-2021. One suggestion was to make trail improvements at the Butterfly Meadow. Ms. O'Hare said the Mayoral budget meeting is March 2nd.

Ms. O'Hare will request input from the Engineering Department regarding restoring the Yellow Trail drainage problem area near the south entrance to Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park.

Also, Ms. O'Hare requested that Commissioners complete a "pollinator report card" on the open space properties they monitor.

Chair Heffernon said the "Big Event" will be on April 4th. *Ms. O'Hare will put "Big Day Event" planning on the March agenda.*

5. ANNUAL REPORT, M. Heffernon

The Commissioners approved Chair Heffernon's draft.

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Nominations were made after brief discussion.

Motion was made by Commissioner Miller to nominate Mary Heffernon as Chair and John Lathrop as Vice Chair; seconded by Commissioner McQueen, and approved unanimously.

7. PUBLIC EVENTS

A. Spring Farm Day event

This event as proposed will not work out. Commissioners suggested talking with another farmer, an orchard or a winery. *This will be discussed in March.*

B. Permaculture Event, Wallingford Public Library

This event took place on February 5th at the library. Chair Heffernon said it was well attended. Four table displays and speakers were available to the public.

C. Proposed owl program

Chair Heffernon and Ms. O'Hare saw this program at the Guilford Library. This will be considered for a future program for the public.

8. REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE

A. Land Conservation Conference, Wesleyan University, Sat., March 21, 2020 – registration.

B. Southwest Conservation District - Farm River Watershed Plan

Ms. O'Hare described this plan, which is being formulated. SCD is collecting information from Farm River watershed stakeholders. The uppermost part of this watershed is in Wallingford, and Ms. O'Hare will be contacting the group. The watershed empties into the Sound at the Branford/East Haven line.

C. Greater New Haven Agriculture Forum, CT Agricultural Experiment Station, Jones Auditorium, 123 Huntington St., New Haven, CT, Feb. 13, 3 p.m.-5 p.m.; received 2/4/20. Ms. O'Hare indicated this networking program, held today by the Connecticut Resources Development Council, was to assist farmers. Fifteen farmers attended. *Ms. O'Hare will find out more about this.*

D. Other – Wallingford Adult Education is having a class on identifying and harvesting local plants and herbs. *Chair Heffernon will contact Adult Education and ask that the teacher remind participants that they cannot harvest plants on Town-owned Open Space.*

9. NEXT MEETING – March 12, 2020

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner McQueen; seconded by Commissioner Sammis, and approved unanimously.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary