

**Final / Approved**

**WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**SPECIAL MEETING**

**Thursday, May 13, 2021, 6:00 p.m.**

**Marcus Cooke Park**

**9 Old Rock Hill Road, Wallingford, CT**

Note: The May 13, 2021 Regular Meeting in Town Hall for 7:00 p.m. was cancelled and a Special Meeting was set and held at Marcus Cooke Park, 9 Old Rock Hill Road, Wallingford, CT, at 6:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Present:** Chair Mary Heffernon, Vice Chair John Lathrop, and Commissioners Jared McQueen, Dianne Saunders, Dianne Lendler, and Brad Sammis. There was one person from the public. Other Commissioners arrived as noted.

Chair Heffernon called the Meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. Special Meeting, April 8, 2021**

**Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of April 8, 2021 as presented; seconded by Commissioner Lendler, and approved unanimously.**

**2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

**A. Tyler Mill Preserve**

**1. Stewards of Tyler Mill**

Commissioner Saunders reported what the Lyman Hall High School students worked on as a Natural Resource Conservation Academy project. Commissioner Saunders assisted them. Students made a story map using technology for the blow-down area between the Green and Purple Trails. They used “before” and “after” photos of the May 2018 microburst event and the vegetation changes on the trails. All this work was mounted on a poster with a QR code link to access 360-degree scenes that the students recorded and prepared over eight months. Those accessing the code can see the drastic changes in invasive species growth by the trails plus students’ suggestions for environmental improvements. Commissioner Saunders would like to put their project online on the Town website and to post it on the Tyler Mill kiosk as well. Chair Heffernon commended Ms. Saunders and the students on their work. Ms. O’Hare said some reproduction costs could be paid for by the Conservation Commission. Chair Heffernon endorsed completing this reproduction work and paying for it from the Commission budget before June 30<sup>th</sup>. *Commissioner Saunders will pursue getting a poster made. Ms. O’Hare will see if the poster can be displayed in Town Hall.*

Commissioner Saunders said they will be cutting back with hedge trimmers and weeding at the corduroy area. The Lilac Trail horse crossing is repaired. Invasives are growing all along Tamarac Swamp Road. Commissioner Jeffrey Borne arrived at 6:15 p.m.

Commissioner Saunders said the garlic mustard is pulled now and put into the Commission’s tarped pile on Field 7E; then they will tarp that area.

2. Bat boxes

*Ms. O'Hare will buy three bat boxes.*

3. Tupelo trees

Commissioner Saunders said these are to be planted together. We won't know which trees are male or female until they are 10 to 12 feet tall. The larger ones at Tamarac Swamp are distanced apart. *Ms. O'Hare will write a Request for Quote to a landscaping company for young tupelo trees. These need to be watered at least once a week. Commissioner Lendler will give Ms. O'Hare a contractor's name for watering.*

Commissioner Carl Arsenault arrived at 6:22 p.m.

4. Green Trail repair

Eric Hansen of Ferrucci & Walicki will recommend how to address the change in hydrology in the area of the corduroy.

Commissioner Mike Miller arrived about 6:26 p.m.

5. Kiosk signage

Commissioner Saunders said Rokap will do the signage edits for the kiosks.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Miller to pay a total of \$117.00 for signs, paint and supplies for the kiosks; seconded by Vice Chair Lathrop, and approved unanimously.**

6. Other reports – None.

**B. Fresh Meadows**

1. 'No Idling' signage

Chair Heffernon has asked Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels to consider signs.

2. Peninsula by southern parking area entrance

Ms. O'Hare suggested putting a large rock here so people do not drive over it in the winter. Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels had agreed that a rock should be installed.

3. Fishing platform

Commissioner Borne included this in his written report tonight.

Ms. O'Hare asked to have more trees added at Fresh Meadows in the northern part on Cheshire Road at the corner in the vicinity of the white house to give privacy from the path; and to use tree species that attract butterflies (hackberry, tupelo, etc.). The Commissioners agreed. *Ms. O'Hare will research prices for these and report back.*

**C. 205 Main Street open space property**

1. Fencing

Ms. O'H are reported that Mr. Rob Baltramaitis, Director of Public Works, has agreed to the need for Town fencing. It will be measured, ordered and installed and paid for under the Open Space Management Resource Fund.

**D. Beseck Meadows**

1. Encroachment over southern property line

This was discussed at the recent Mayoral meeting. The Engineering Department went out and marked the boundary of the house yard. There is encroachment by the owner's lawn, an area of 3 to 4 feet by 30 feet. *Ms. O'Hare will follow up with the Law Department.*

2. Bamboo – cutting & private encroachment by bamboo

Ms. O'Hare said the next-door owner made three cuts 20 feet wide in order to access his property through the Town property. She said the Town should put up at least two posts with signs "This is Town property" in order to mark the Town's line. The neighbor has a 10' by 18' patch of bamboo growing behind his pool, which Commissioner Miller said has been there for a while. *Ms. O'Hare will provide more information, and then Corporation Counsel Small will write a letter to the neighbor about that patch of bamboo.*

3. Boundary line proposal – As discussed above.

**E. Cliffside Drive**

Chair Heffernon has been unsuccessful in attempting to get Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis to meet Commissioners here to discuss ATV trespass and design a solution.

**F. Property Monitoring Reports – M. Heffernon, J. Borne, B. Sammis, E. O'Hare**

Chair Heffernon said the Ferguson Woods trails are in good shape. There are lots of forsythia, skunk cabbage, trout lilies. Her pool cover over the knotweed for two years has worked, and it is shady there. Now she would like to add three bushes. Commissioner Arsenault suggested planting red clover for ground cover, and Ms. O'Hare suggested adding dogwood bushes. *Ms. O'Hare will purchase some appropriate bushes for this spot as directed by Chair Heffernon.*

Commissioner Borne reported on Fresh Meadows Open Space. Garlic mustard invasive is prevalent on Tessa's Trail as well as poison ivy. Trails are in good shape. The memorial tupelo is thriving; white pines at the south end have filled in to create screening; the red maples along Cheshire Road on the east boundary are healthy. *Commissioner Borne recommended to take down the two Trees of Heaven in the northeast corner plus the one on the knoll. Commissioner Arsenault may assist.* Commissioner Borne said mugwort is along the entire asphalt trail and by the Butterfly Trail and is moving into the field to the south.

Commissioner Borne's maintenance recommendations: 1) The Cheshire Road catch basin by the Cuneo lot should be cleared. Ms. O'Hare said it is already on the Town's three-year schedule for catch basins. 2) The garlic mustard should be removed now before it goes to seed at the pond and at Tessa's Trail. 3) Public Works could be asked to remove the tire from the west side of the trail, two wicker chairs, and a square of corrugated metal. And Commissioner Borne suggested raking the access to Tessa's Trail to make the trail harder there. Commissioner Borne added a possible project for Quinnipiac University students: To create a trail leading from the pond where the stone dust trail ends and then along the fisherman's trail that could meet Tessa's Trail to make a loop.

Commissioner Sammis reported on the 205 Main Street Yalesville Open Space. It is a simple open space without trails or parking. It looks well and can be seen from the street. The sign has been fixed. Ms. O'Hare pointed out about the encroachment issue here. The area involves about a quarter acre of Town land. A fence will be put up because the neighbor keeps pushing the boundary back.

Ms. O'Hare submitted her report on Doolittle Park, with photos from today. It has a small riparian corridor, which can be maintained through volunteer effort and Public Works can assist. Prior, Mr. Ken Ryan had kept track of all the volunteer ideas, and someone else is needed to keep a running project list for volunteers. Phragmites are in the parking lot by the Wall Street bridge, plus knotweed. A larger project is the mugwort at the border. Also, one giant autumn olive needs to come out. Commissioner Saunders brought up that the reed canary grass south of the Wharton Brook wooden footbridge could be removed. But Ms. O'Hare added that there are invasive yellow irises growing in with it.

Ms. O'Hare continued: One of the three residential properties by the bridge has put large riprap down to the river. That is a FEMA violation, to put rock in the floodway of Wharton Brook. *Ms. O'Hare will alert Kenny Michaels, Director of Parks and Recreation, about the house near the Wall Street bridge where the owner manicured the lawn down to the water line and planted garden plants, which is also a violation that is on park property.* Also, *Ms. O'Hare will ask Public Works to clear out a big new area of poison ivy.* And *Ms. O'Hare will follow up on any IWWC violations in this vicinity and write letters.*

### **G. Grand Street garden**

Ms. O'Hare and Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels are trying to get permission to use an area that is 3 feet by 45 feet at the factory wall. Public Works will take out the old soil and bring in new soil. Ms. O'Hare has discussed a preliminary order with EarthTones for Connecticut native plants. A contractor would need to be retained to watch over it this summer.

### **H. Other properties – None.**

## **3. STUDENT PROJECTS**

### **A. Agricultural Science Student Initiative**

Lyman Hall High School students received permission from Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission to do preparatory work on the land lab parcel to remove invasives and replant with native plants. Commissioner Saunders said the students are learning a lot.

### **B. Lyman Hall National Honor Society Students Project**

In connection to 2.G. Grand Street garden, Chair Heffernon learned that the students will be out of school by the time this project will occur.

## **4. BUDGET FY 20-21 – Professional Services – Natural Resources – discussion of uses**

*Commissioner Saunders will recommend how to eradicate mugwort at a spot in Tyler Mill Preserve and then advise what to plant in its place. Chair Heffernon advised to plant grass there for now.*

## **5. BUDGET FY 21-22**

**A. (Remote) Public Hearing for the public**, April 12, 2021 – There were no questions on April 12.

**B. (Remote) Public Hearing for Town Council**, May 4, 2021 – This meeting was cancelled because the Councilors had no questions on the budget. The new budget will probably be \$8,715, of which \$6,000 is designated as “Professional Services - Natural Resources”.

## **6. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM**

### **A. Farmland Lease Committee**

Commissioner Saunders said the Committee has not met.

### **B. Bid proposals: Fields 5A, 7A, & 8B**

*Commissioner Saunders and Ms. O'Hare will meet next week concerning bids for these three fields.* Land conservation responsibilities will be removed from these leases and put out to bid to private

contractor(s) who will have access to the fields. *On Field 5A, the Engineering Department surveyed the property line, and Public Works will install posts.* Fields 7A and 8B were not discussed.

**C. Field 7A, Northford Rd.** – hunter parking proposal

Ms. O’Hare has asked for a correction to the parking area next to Field 7A.

**D. Fields 7B, 7C, 7D** – gate

Ms. O’Hare said that a farm gate is needed. The Town has a contract for a gate and a fence.

**E. Several fields** – compliance with lease terms – No discussion.

**8. BIG EVENT – Quinnipiac University** – April 10 – report

Chair Heffernon stated that the college students were a great help, as always. Four trails in Tyler Mill Preserve were reblazed.

**9. OPEN SPACE USERS GROUP MEETING** – Agenda suggestions – May 25, 5:30 p.m.

This meeting will be moderated by Parks and Recreation Department Superintendent of Recreation Michelle Bjorkman. Topics may include: trails at Tyler Mill Preserve; biking regulations; a guided walk at Tyler Mill Preserve; the Conservation Commission’s current projects; and a memorial tribute to Steward Harry Hubbard.

**10. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE.** All these were announced to the Commissioners:

**A. DEEP magazine, CT Wildlife, Mar.-Apr. 2021**

**B. CFPA “Save Our Trails” funding plea**

**C. CT Butterfly Association magazine**

**7. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**A. Executive Session pursuant to CT General Statutes Sect. 1-225(f) and Sect. 1-200(6) for the discussion of the selection of real estate for possible purchase**

**Motion by Commissioner Miller to go into Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.**

At 7:44 p.m. the Recording Secretary and the member of the audience left the meeting area.

At 7:50 p.m. the Recording Secretary was called back into the meeting.

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

**11. NEXT MEETING** – June 10, 2021

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.**

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns, Recording Secretary