

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, October 14, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Room 315 – Town Hall

45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT

Note: The October 14, 2021 Regular Meeting in Town Hall for 7:00 p.m. was cancelled and a Special Meeting was set to be held in Room 315, Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT, at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Mike Miller, Vice Chair John Lathrop, and Commissioners Carl Arsenault, Dianne Lendler, Jared McQueen, Brad Sammis, Dianne Saunders and Jim Pyskaty, and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare.

Absent: None.

The following Minutes are scheduled to be approved at the next Meeting.

Chair Miller called the Meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Special Meeting, Sept. 9, 2021

Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to accept the Special Meeting Minutes of September 9, 2021 as presented; seconded by Commissioner Pyskaty, and approved by Chair Miller, Vice Chair Lathrop, and Commissioners Arsenault, Lendler, McQueen, Sammis, Saunders and Pyskaty.

Commissioner Jeffrey Borne arrived at 6:14 p.m.

There was no Agenda Item 2.

3. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Lendler said the kiosks have been cleaned and painted. Some canvases have been painted as well. Commissioner Lendler said the plexiglass at Vietnam Veterans Field is foggy and yellowed. Vice Chair Lathrop suggested to use fine grit lens cleaning polish from an auto parts store. *Commissioner Lendler will follow up.*

Some Commissioners and Steward Scott Gray will see about the Boy Scouts' care of the Horse Trail. Commissioner Lendler said now some hot pink arrows mark where the Pink Trail comes up from Maltby Lane, but more markers are needed to show where the trail begins and goes down to the water. *The Trails Committee will follow up on issues regarding White Trail, horseback trail, Pink Trail.*

Commissioner Saunders said the “Hunting” and “No Hunting” signs came in from DEEP. She wrote to notify Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels and will see that the signs are posted. Also, Eversource this week has put up notification of work signs at the entrance to Northrop Road.

The Commission discussed options for footbridge replacements or possible trail rerouting. *The Trails Committee, with Commissioners Saunders and Lendler and Steward Scott Gray, will review issue onsite soon and come back with suggestions.*

2. Bat boxes – installation – *Ms. O’Hare will hire someone to install the three bat boxes.*

3. Green Trail repair & footbridge – report

Commissioner Saunders will get two more quotes. It measured as 68 feet. The first vendor is able to get locust wood versus pressure-treated wood.

4. Kiosk signage

Commissioner Saunders said public information handouts are being prepared for the Tyler Mill Open Space kiosk. The new map handouts will be available at the Library, at Parks and Recreation Department, and at the kiosks. *Chair Miller will contact Kenny Michaels, Director of Parks and Recreation, to find out if the map of Tyler Mill could be installed on the Town website. Chair Miller and Commissioner Saunders will show the proposed language to Corporation Counsel Janis Small. Commissioner Saunders will provide Ms. O’Hare sign specifications, and then she can obtain quotes. Ms. O’Hare said that funds will probably come from the Open Space Management Fund. When printed, Chair Miller will work with Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels to post it.*

Commissioner Saunders added that the Engineering Department made “Closed to Horses” signs for the Orange Trail.

5. Mowing

Commissioner Saunders said that she, Commissioner Arsenault, and a Steward went out and did mowing of the trail sides in Tyler Mill at the Red North and Red South, plus entrances, and the Lilac Trail. It costs \$100 to rent the mower. Commissioner Saunders said they will mow the Green Trail behind Vietnam Veterans Park, the Pink Trail, and the field behind Vietnam Veterans Park. *Ms. O’Hare will request a signpost “White Trail” for where it stops there.*

6. Other reports

The Town Council’s agenda last week included an item “Discussion of Recreation at Tyler Mill,” and John Lathrop and several Commissioners attended. This was discussed briefly tonight. Commissioners noted that the Parks and Recreation Department conducted the first meeting of the “Tyler Mill Users Group.”

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Peninsula by southern parking area entrance

Nothing has been done.

2. Trail restoration – Storm Ida damage – update

Nothing has been done. *Ms. O’Hare will follow up with Department of Public Works.*

3. Tupelo health – report

Ms. O’Hare had seen summer “stalky” growth on those new trees. *She will check for tree trunk damage by insects or mowing, and will call the Connecticut Agricultural Science Station, if needed, and will talk to the vendor.*

4. Japanese knotweed eradication

Ms. O’Hare reported three large areas where the Japanese knotweed was in flower, and asked if the Commission wants chemical treatment on it next year. The two larger areas are next to the gas line easement by Rosick Road. Commissioner Arsenault thought that mowing there probably had spread it. *Commissioner Borne will see those areas and submit his report in November.*

5. Other – None.

C. 205 Main Street open space property

1. Trespass fencing – update

Approved fencing has yet to be installed.

D. Beseck Meadows

1. Bamboo – cutting & private encroachment by bamboo – update

Ms. O’Hare is to follow up.

E. Cliffside Drive trail – restrict ATVs – update

No progress to report.

F. Pragemann Park – fence repair

Ms. O’Hare wrote to Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels reporting the need for repairs at two ripped openings in the south side fence.

G. Property Reports: Bertini Park/J. Lathrop; Beseck Meadow/M. Miller; Cliffside Dr./

C. Arsenault; Tyler Mill Preserve/D. Saunders & D. Lendler; Doolittle Park/staff; Ferguson Woods/J. Pyskaty; Fresh Meadows/J. Borne; Main St., Yalesville/B. Sammis

Bertini Park – Vice Chair Lathrop said it is in good shape, with no litter and all trails open. He suggested using green patches at both knolls to lead walkers beyond there.

Beseck Meadow – Chair Miller – No report.

Marcus Cooke Park – Commissioner McQueen said the trails there held up well during Storm Ida.

Ferguson Woods – Commissioner Pyskaty said the Purple Trail is clean, but part-way up the access road (Dibble Edge Road) is somewhat eroded from the rains. *Ms. O’Hare will ask Public Works if they will fix these road ruts.*

Tyler Mill Preserve – Commissioners Saunders and Lendler. Commissioner Saunders reported that the Tyler Mill trailhead wood sign at the bridge by the parking lot is cracked in half and rotting. *Vice Chair Lathrop will repair it.* Commissioner Lendler said she found one Mile-A-Minute weed on the Green Trail. *Commissioner Lendler and Stewards will address it.* Commissioner Saunders reported a mass of

Trees of Heaven (TOH) between areas 53-54 on the edge of Field 7B. Those trees should be girdled and treated. Commissioner Arsenault cautioned about how TOH trees fall. Commissioner Saunders said that cutting TOH only results in clonal growth. Vice Chair Lathrop advised to treat every other TOH now and to treat the rest next year. Commissioner Saunders said TOH is known as a host to the invasive spotted lantern fly. It looks like the nearby sign has woodpecker damage. She added that Department of Public Works did a very good job of repairing ruts in the closed road after Storm Ida.

Cliffside Drive – Commissioner Arsenault said the area did not look bad after Storm Ida. He reported the Orange Trail going up the slope is washed out badly, and it was hard to tell whether anyone is taking ATVs up there. He saw someone who indicated he had not seen activity there recently. The top of the trail is in good shape. There is evidence of riders going down there from the power lines area and that some grass is starting again. They still use it the trail they made between the power lines and the ski area. The Blue Trail on top is rerouted from steeper areas. The Connecticut Forest and Parks Association did reroute one trail nearby, which looked better. At the entrance to the Orange Trail by Cliffside Drive, there are some good-sized Trees of Heaven on Town property. *Ms. O'Hare will add those trees onto the future contract.* Where High Hill Road is coming downhill on Town property off the Right-Of-Way behind private homes, there are about 12 Trees of Heaven, some larger and some newer. Commissioner Arsenault also reported some dumping on the cul-de-sac between houses #50 and #60. *Ms. O'Hare will follow up.* Commissioner Arsenault did not see new evidence of ATV entry.

Doolittle Park was not taken up tonight.

Chair Miller will do Beseck Meadow, and the other Commissioners will present their property reports next month.

Main Street, Yalesville – Commissioner Sammis already reported on this Open Space.

H. Open Space signage

Ms. O'Hare will photograph some signs that show public access to open space properties for State DEEP reporting. Ms. O'Hare will put an Open Space sign by the beginning of the horse riders' access on Field 18A, off Tamarac Swamp Road.

I. Other properties – None.

4. COMMITTEES

A. Review existing committee membership

These Committee memberships were agreed upon by consensus tonight:

Trails Committee – Carl Arsenault, John Lathrop, Jim Pyskaty, Mike Miller. (Note: Commissioner Saunders said the Trails Committee also reports to Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels.)

Farmland Lease Committee – Carl Arsenault, Brad Sammis, Dianne Saunders, Mike Miller.

B. New committees

A new committee was agreed upon: Open Space Acquisitions Committee – Jeffrey Borne, Chair; Jim Pyskaty, Brad Sammis, Mike Miller

Commissioner Borne asked to talk about community outreach and committees in November. Commissioner Saunders said community outreach and education could be by the committees.

A few years ago, Chair Miller and Commissioner Arsenault were appointed to represent Wallingford in a working group of the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association because the National Scenic Trail passes through here, but that is no longer a working group.

5. 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 Sammis to go into Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner Pyskaty, and approved unanimously.

The Recording Secretary left the room at this time, 8:23 p.m.

The Recording Secretary was called back into the room at 8:55 p.m.

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

Time of Executive Session: 8:23 p.m. to 8:55 p.m.

Attendance at Executive Session: Chair Miller, Vice Chair Lathrop, and Commissioners Arsenault, Borne, Lendler, McQueen, Sammis, Saunders, and Pyskaty, and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare.

Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to write a letter of support on Property 1 discussed and a letter of consensus on Property 2 discussed; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.

Ms. O'Hare will follow up.

6. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Bids: Fields 5A, 7A, & 8B – award Oct. 12

Ms. O'Hare said the bid was issued a two-week extension. The Town Council awarded the three bids at its October 12 Meeting to The Johnson Family Farm.

B. Farmland Lease Committee

1. Monitoring Reports – C. Arsenault
Commissioner Arsenault had no report tonight.
2. Compliance with lease terms
This was not discussed.
3. Lessee conference, Sept. 10 – report
This was not discussed.
4. Conservation management in farm fields
This was not discussed.

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

No report.

D. Fields 7B, 7C, 7D – gate

Commissioner Saunders said that a neighbor has put in a temporary gate to keep trespassers out.

E. Field 7F – mow

Commissioner Saunders will write the mowing specifications.

F. Field 18A – Eversource Transmission Upgrade Project

Ms. O’Hare said this project has been delayed in starting but will start soon.

G. Other – No items were brought up.

7. OFFICIAL OPEN SPACE MAP – updated

Ms. O’Hare is working on the update.

8. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Connecticut Land Conservation Council – received.

B. CFPA – Fall Events – received.

C. Connecticut Butterfly Association – Fall 2021 – received.

D. Data Centers

Ms. O’Hare said this Zoning topic will continue to be discussed by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

9. NEXT MEETING – November 4, 2021

The Commissioners agreed to continue meeting at 6:00 p.m. *Ms. O’Hare will confirm the time and location of the next meeting.*

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary