

MINUTES

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, December 9, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Room 315 – Town Hall

45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT

Note: The December 9, 2021 Regular Meeting in the Basement Meeting Room of Town Hall for 7:00 p.m. was cancelled and a Special Meeting was set in Room 315 of Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT, at 6:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Present: Chair Mike Miller and Commissioners Dianne Saunders, Dianne Lendler, Brad Sammis, Jeffrey Borne, Jim Pyskaty, and Environmental Planner Erin O’Hare.

Absent: Commissioner Jared McQueen.

Chair Miller called the Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Notes: Vice Chair John Lathrop arrived at 6:02 p.m. and Commissioner Arsenault arrived as noted below.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Special Meeting, Nov. 4, 2021

Commissioner Saunders proposed these corrections:

- p. 2 at 2.A.1. to change “Commissioner Saunders is” to “Commissioners Lendler and Lathrop are”.
- p. 2 at 2.A.4, second sentence, to change “Details should be shown” to “Details could be shown”.
- p. 3 at 2.H., paragraph 1, sentence 2, to change “Also, she believes that the Town had conveyed” to “Also, she suggested that the Town may have conveyed”.
- p.5 at 5.D., to record that the gate is “Not done yet.” And to move to the end of 5.F., “The Lessee moved the cows to Field 18A recently. But the cows will stay on the field here while the work is being done.”

Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to accept the Minutes of November 4, 2021, as amended; seconded by Commissioner Pyskaty, and approved by Commissioners Lathrop, Pyskaty, Miller, Lendler, Saunders, Borne, and Sammis.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Lendler reported that new trails are being made off the Blue Trail and elsewhere in the Preserve. Commissioner Saunders agreed. *Chair Miller asked Commissioner Saunders to send him an illustration of what new trails are being made in Tyler Mill Preserve, and he will communicate with Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels.*

Commissioner Saunders said there are about 14 Stewards of Tyler Mill. We do Stewards' training, and we submit their names to Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels for approval. She submitted the list to Ms. O'Hare for the file. The idea of having Stewards originated in 2011 from the Open Space Users Group, who recognized the need for ongoing maintenance at Tyler Mill Preserve. Training is involved. Ms. O'Hare noted that hunting days are Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday for small game—coyotes and smaller. Ms. O'Hare asked if recreational use is less on hunting days. Commissioner Saunders said somewhat less.

2. Bat boxes – installation

Ms. O'Hare said there is no report.

3. Green Trail repair & footbridge – report

Ms. O'Hare described the three quotes, which were discussed and compared. *Ms. O'Hare will call Eric Hansen for input.* The Commission wants white oak and locust wood to be used. *Commissioner Saunders said the old wood will be cut out by Stewards, and she will ask Public Works to haul it away.* Vice Chair Lathrop wanted this work to be done in winter when the ground is frozen. Ms. O'Hare said the Mayor must authorize the expenditure to buy the lumber and also for the contractor.

Motion by Chair Miller that the Commission spend approximately \$7,750 for the 70-foot locust wood footbridge reconstruction on the Green Trail and for white oak wood to be used at a smaller length, approximately 22 feet, of additional reconstruction on the Green Trail in Tyler Mill Preserve; seconded by Commissioner Lendler, and approved unanimously by Commissioners Miller, Lendler, Lathrop, Pyskaty, Saunders, Borne, and Sammis.

4. Kiosk signage

Commissioners said they may or may not choose a separate pedestal to mount the large map display plus the new rules wording. *All Commissioners should give input soon to Commissioners Lendler and Lathrop, who will review the suggestions and report back.* These new signs could be posted at the Maltby Lane and Northford Road entrances.

5. Other reports

Commissioner Saunders circulated the new State DEEP-sponsored book Conservation of Amphibians & Reptiles in Connecticut, which is very well done. Tyler Mill is mentioned as a location for snakes and other species. She noted the book indicates that multiflora rose and burning bush in Tyler Mill, which are invasives, actually help protect these species.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Peninsula by southern parking area entrance – No report.

2. Trail stone dust restoration & storm Ida trail bed damage – update – No report.

3. Dogwood tree replacement

Ms. O'Hare said the vendor is willing, but this tree will not be replaced until later on.

4. Other – None.

C. 205 Main Street open space property

1. Trespass fencing – update

Commissioner Sammis the trespass fence has not been installed yet by Public Works. He found that no branches are overhanging the 205 Main Street driving lane. He submitted his written report. See 2.G. below.

D. Beseck Meadows

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

Ms. O'Hare will write this letter.

2. Access road erosion, minor dumping, vegetation by gate

This item was not taken up.

E. Beseck Mountain

1. Cliffside Drive trail – restrict ATVs – update. No information.

2. Yard waste dumping

Ms. O'Hare said the Engineering Department has marked the area as Town property. It's a small woods. But she did not ask Public Works yet to remove the illegally dumped material here. *Ms. O'Hare will write a letter to the three property owners nearby who were responsible for the dumping.*

F. Pragemann Park – fence repair. No report.

G. Property Reports: Doolittle Park – staff; Fresh Meadows – J. Borne; 205 Main St., Yalesville – B. Sammis

Doolittle Park - *Ms. O'Hare will copy to Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels the report of unauthorized leaf dumping in the river plus a broken parking lot curb and gouged lawn area.* Also, Ms. O'Hare brought up the need to remove invasive plants, which may be a task for the Big Event day in April.

Fresh Meadows – Commissioner Borne reported invasives, mostly in the southern field. Ms. O'Hare said Public Works has mowed three fields so far.

Commissioner Carl Arsenault arrived at 7:52 p.m.

Commissioner Borne did not see any big ruts on the whole trail, so Public Works may have repaired them. Ken Ryan's tree looks well, and he recommended taking the fencing off the bottom. *Commissioner Saunders will remove it.* Parking areas are all in good shape; the picnic area was mowed. He saw four walkers yesterday. No erosion is by the storm drain near the Cuneo parking lot, but the slope that was resurfaced before is eroding again. He noted trash in three areas. Also, a 25-foot utility pole is lying by the Butterfly Meadow at the east edge near the maple tree. *Ms. O'Hare will ask Public Works about these two situations.*

Commissioner Borne suggested adding a trail from the pond connecting to Tessa's Trail. The Commission would have to do siting work. It could be moved farther inland where it is drier. Also, he suggested to create a fishing and car-top boat access at the west side of the pond. Ms. O'Hare said there is a plan for that where there was to be a fishing dock. Commissioner Borne recommended putting an area of fill or planks or a floating dock or ramp for someone to bring in a canoe or kayak. Also, he asked to consider buffer plants or trees in strategic areas between Cheshire Road and the asphalt trail, and mugwort there needs to be addressed. Ms. O'Hare said that Public Works mows to 15 feet from the road, and the snow shelf is there. Commissioner Saunders indicated a slope from the erratic boulder about 50 yards toward Cheshire for plantings. *Chair Miller asked Commissioner Borne to sketch out this buffer and to consider plantings by the pond with no name. White pine would benefit it, and would also box in the Phragmites.* Commissioner Borne submitted his report and the checklist.

205 Main St., Yalesville – B. Sammis

Ms. O'Hare reported that the neighbor next door has returned to using Town property here. Commissioner Sammis had observed private vehicles parked in the Town open space next to the private home. Public Works still has to put up the approved fence. The cost will come from the Open Space Resource Management Fund.

H. 155 Grieb Road – trespass, dumping – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare said survey stakes were installed by the Engineering Department, which indicated the owner has been mowing 20 feet x 100 feet of Town property for years, and he had his contractor put the lawn clippings, leaves and branches, into the Town's woods. So Ms. O'Hare showed him somewhere on his property to put the clippings.

I. Dumping ordinance relative to Town open space properties

Ms. O'Hare will show this ordinance to the Commissioners.

J. Proposed Ecological Assessments – Professional Services-Natural Resources

Ms. O'Hare asked the Commissioners for location suggestions for this line item—e.g., the Commission might do an ecological assessment at the open space on George Washington Trail.

K. Other properties – None.

3. TRAIL COMMITTEE REPORT – J. Lathrop

Vice Chair Lathrop said he would notify Committee members of four issue spots to see after the holidays.

4. COMMITTEES

A. Committees

At this time the Committees are:

Trails Committee – John Lathrop, Chair, with Carl Arsenault, Jim Pyskaty, and Mike Miller. And

Dianne Lendler will serve as liaison between the Stewards and the Trails Committee.

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

Open Space Acquisition Committee – Jeffrey Borne, Chair, with Jim Pyskaty, Brad Sammis, and

Mike Miller.

The Annual Report on Conservation Commission activities will be presented to the Town Council in January.

Chair Miller asked Ms. O'Hare to place the suggestion to have a Public Outreach Committee on the January agenda.

B. Committee roles

Chair Miller asked for language for roles for the next agenda.

5. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee

1. Compliance with lease terms

Commissioner Saunders reported that Public Works had mowed Field 7F, and *Commissioner Saunders will see it now*. Separately, there are signs that bikers using fatter tires have gone into Field 2A and made three-inch ruts. *Ms. O'Hare said the Farmland Lease Committee needs to meet to address all compliance. Chair Miller will set a date with Steve Bozzutto regarding 3-B Ranch's lease areas.*

2. Conservation management by contractors

Commissioner Saunders said the lessee for Field 1A is asking for direction from Ms. O'Hare on what to do about autumn olive there. *Ms. O'Hare will call the Field 1A lessee and also obtain quotes to cut autumn olive trees. Ms. O'Hare requested the Committee meet to discuss this matter.*

B. Field 1A, No. Branford Rd. – conservation maintenance issue

It was agreed that the Farmland Lease Committee work crew—with the lessee's permission—should cut the autumn olive invasives in Field 1A now in the winter. In the spring, the Commission may decide to have a contractor brush-hog the cuttings and move those to the road edge and then to ask Public Works to pick those up. Also, the Commission may want to have the remaining sprouts sprayed in the spring. Ms. O'Hare advised that money for contracted work is available in the Open Space Resources Management account.

C. Field 7A, Northford Rd. – hunter parking proposal – No activity.

D. Fields 7B, 7C, 7D off Anderson Rd. – gate

A temporary gate has been installed. Ms. O'Hare and Chair Miller will confer about this and other issues with Director of Public Works Rob Baltramaitis after the holidays.

E. Field 7F, off Northford Rd. – mowing

Public Works has done this mowing as requested.

F. Field 18A, 995 C East Center St. – Eversource Transmission Upgrade Project

Commissioner Saunders said that Mile-A-Minute weed is in Tamarac Swamp Road R.O.W. from the Eversource R.O.W., and it has jumped onto adjacent private property. The Connecticut Agricultural Extension Station has released weevils to address this issue.

G. Extensions: 1A, 1C, 1D, 6A, 6B, 13A & 20A

Ms. O'Hare reported that she called the lessees today, and they are looking for extensions.

H. Other – None.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

Motion by Commissioner Pyskaty to go into Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner Sammis, and approved unanimously by Commissioners Pyskaty, Lendler, Miller, Lathrop, Saunders, Borne, Sammis, and Arsenault.

The Recording Secretary left the meeting at this time, 8:02 p.m.

At 8:23 p.m., the Recording Secretary was called back into the room.

Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to come out of Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner Pyskaty, and approved unanimously by Commissioners Pyskaty, Lendler, Miller, Lathrop, Saunders, Borne, Sammis, and Arsenault.

Time of Executive Session: 8:02 p.m. to 8:23 p.m.

Attendance at Executive Session:

Chair Miller, Vice Chair Lathrop, and Commissioners Pyskaty, Lendler, Saunders, Borne, Sammis, and Arsenault and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare.

7. OFFICIAL OPEN SPACE MAP – review revised/updated map

Ms. O'Hare showed the draft updated map copies that she has been working on with Engineering Department staff input. Farmland lease areas are not indicated on this map. *Ms. O'Hare will provide Commissioners with the updated Open Space Properties spreadsheet keyed to property numbers on this map plus notes made by Town Planner Kacie Hand. Ms. O'Hare asked the Commissioners to study the copies and to return with corrections and suggestions at the next meeting.*

8. QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY STUDENT VOLUNTEERS, 'The Big Event', April 9, 2022 - Proposal

Vice Chair Lathrop will communicate with Quinnipiac University faculty regarding student volunteers. Commissioners are asked to suggest possible projects at the January meeting for The Big Event.

9. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. CT DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Application, Stevens property, 264 Williams Road – staff

Ms. O'Hare showed the support documentation that she researched and provided for this State grant application submitted to DEEP on November 18.

B. POCD Implementation Committee – status report, staff

Ms. O’Hare has written to Town Planner Kevin Pagini about the status of this committee. The current Plan of Conservation and Development was adopted five years ago.

C. CT Bird Atlas survey – report, staff

Ms. O’Hare reported this organization sent a birder to Field 2A for its survey.

D. DEEP – The Urban Forestry Climate Change Grant Program, deadline Feb. 1, 2022;
received 11/22/21

Ms. O’Hare said that State grant money is available. She has given the application information to Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis, who is the Town Tree Warden.

E. 2022 General Assembly Session – discussion regarding possible legislative proposals; received
11/22/21

The Commissioners had no comment tonight.

10. NEXT MEETING – January 13, 2022

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary