

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
TOWN OF WALLINGFORD
December 11, 2008**

MINUTES

The Wallingford Conservation Commission held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, December 11, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. in the Basement Conference Room of the Town Hall Municipal Building, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT. Present were Chairman Jeffrey Borne, Vice Chairperson Mary Heffernon, and Commissioners Carl Arsenault, John Lathrop, James Pyskaty, Kenneth Ryan, and Dianne Saunders. The Town staff persons present were Ms. Erin O'Hare, Environmental and Natural Resources Planner, and Recording Secretary Ms. Kathleen Burns. No one was present from the public.

Chairman Borne called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A, Minutes – November 13, 2008

These corrections were noted on page 5:

- Under 2.E.2. Butterfly Meadow, after the motion, to delete Mary Heffernon's name and to say that "Erin O'Hare will arrange with Mr. Will Shultz and his Vo-Ag students to drill and place the seed."

- At the end of 2.F. Garden Road, 1. Skatepark plan, in the last sentence to delete the words "this plan" and to replace them with "adding the boat launch". The last sentence will read: "Tonight the Conservation Commission members unanimously voiced support for adding the boat launch".

Motion: Mary Heffernon, to approve the minutes of the November 13th meeting as corrected.

Second: Ken Ryan.

Vote: Unanimous.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Trails System Improvement Plan

a. DEP Recreational Trails Grant

Ms. O'Hare reported that Don Roe has learned that the archaeologist's field work will be completed in December and then submitted to the DEP.

b. Trail Blazing Contract

Ms. O'Hare said the Engineering Department is computing the trail segments to count the mileage. Ken Ryan and Mary Heffernon will try to have someone "read" the Connwood data disk which Town computers cannot "read" Ms. O'Hare will call Connwood again

About the Tyler Mill trails, Ms. O'Hare asked the Commissioners their preference on naming the trails. The trails could be named for their blaze color or the more historic names, such as "Fisherman's Loop Trail" could be used. It was the Commissioners'

unanimous consensus to use the historic trail names, as the neighbors and visitors have known them, but to also associate the trail-blaze color with the trail name.

B. Farmland Lease Properties Program

1. Field 1D – fencing. Ms. O'Hare had been asked again after a field walk on the site November 19 to develop the cost for a fence at Field 1D. People enter park, and/or drive their vehicles over Field 1D, which is damaging to any crops there. In discussion, Mr. Lathrop suggested installing wooden stakes and a string line at the property line. He thought that the Lessee should be the one to put the fence up. There are extra stakes on a field nearby. Carl Arsenault asked if a gate could be installed across the bottom of the roadway. Dianne Saunders said that the farmer just planted alfalfa in there for the winter. She suggested that the farmer would post signs that say "Farm Crops". The Commissioners' consensus was to ask Ms. O'Hare to write a letter asking for the Rod and Gun Club's cooperation in respecting that common boundary.

Carl Arsenault reported seeing Autumn olive starting to grow again on Fields 1A and 1C. These fields will be mowed by Public Works in March.

2. Field 7A – Northford Road

Ms. O'Hare reported that Public Works Department has restored the stormwater detention basin on this field.

3. Bid Proposal – No action.

4. Field 14A – 205 Main Street – Encroachment

Since 1999 there have been one variance, two building additions, and a pool permit issued. Neither the Building Department nor the Zoning Board of Appeals required a survey. Ms. O'Hare said the Department of Law recently wrote to the LeGrands, requesting that they should respond with any information they have prior to the January 8, meeting.

C. Bertini Park

1. Campground Proposal

Parks and Recreation Director John Gawlak said this project is on hold due to budget constraints.

D. Beseck Mountain

1. Cliffside Trail – Boundary Marking

Letters went out to the two neighboring property owners to the trail accessway. The neighbor on the north responded that he understands the request to observe the property line and that he is using his property appropriately. There has been no response from the neighbor on the south. His woodpile is encroaching on the trail access, but he has been using the wood from the encroaching side.

E. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Tree Plantings – Kogut Nursery will hold these extra trees for now, so the

Department of Public Works can plant them as directed in the spring. For ice skating use at the pond, the light pole will be put back into service and a portable toilet will be brought onto the property.

2. Butterfly Meadow

Mary Heffernon said the seed mix has been received. The Committee is waiting for Mr. Shultz to pull out the stored Vo-Ag equipment. Hopefully, the students will be able to drill and place the seed this month.

3. Walking Path Concept Plan (Phase Two)

Ms. O'Hare asked the Commissioners to see walking paths at various sites such as at Cove Island Park in Stamford. They should look at the various materials used and the styling of the pathway. Carl Arsenault and John Lathrop suggested that the path should be mowed first to see whether the public will find it convenient to keep to the mown path. Chairman Borne suggested putting gravel over that later on. Dianne Saunders wanted to see the path cleared to the hill and also to the hilltop at the Galko property. There is a lot of poison ivy, but the view is worth it. Ms. O'Hare suggested that the Commissioners should have a meeting out there to consider the property in connection with Mr. Zemba's grassland habitat recommendations and the esthetics from user stand point.

Ms. O'Hare suggested a possible contract relative to the preparation of a management plan for Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road.

4. Boundary Marking

Ms. O'Hare just received the Engineering survey crew's map for this Fresh Meadows open space. There is no legend on it, so it is hard to decipher. Also, there was discussion on whether each boundary marking should bear two markers: on the outside facing outward and a marker behind it facing inward, toward the open space land. The Commissioners saw value in that method. It could prove helpful, for example, to inform hunters at Tyler Mill Preserve. Ms. O'Hare will ask whether the markings should be done this way. Carl Arsenault suggested painting red and yellow circles at five feet high on the perimeter tree trunks, along with the posted signs like the DEP does.

F. Scard Road

1. Contract Proposal – Ms. O'Hare said that contract writing takes time. She suggested that someone should be hired to write the contract requirements for an early successional planting for this property. For now, Chairman Borne said that a management plan and a scope of work are needed. Ken Ryan said that suggestions for a management plan should come from the consultant's recent report. He also referred to the recent CACIWC outline on what to consider in forming a management plan. Then the Commission can choose what needs to be done and the projected cost. This property has about 19 acres. It can be divided into two management units: one part on one side of Scard Road and the other part across the road. Land on the south side is smaller and should be easier to plan out. The property on the north, called the Keer property, is more complex. It was decided that Ms. O'Hare should write to ask Public Works Director Henry McCully to mow around the cedar trees on the south side, sometime between now and March 1st. This would get rid of the woody shrubs around the cedars, control the invasives, and to provide for appropriate successional growth. The

Commission may set a special meeting to walk the Keer property and may form a committee to oversee its management.

G. Invasive Species Eradication

1. DEP Invasive Species Grant application - The Town of Wallingford did not submit this grant application which would have applied to the Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road and the Tyler Mill Preserve. The State required that the invasive knotweed or Phragmites had to have been discovered within the last three years, the minimum proposal had to be at least \$2500 and Ms. O'Hare had obtained a quote for less, and other problematic criteria. It was concluded that the properties did not meet the criteria, and no application was made.

Ms. O'Hare will ask the Department of Public Works to remove the trash piles at the Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road.

2. Long-term Invasive Species Management Program Proposal

a. Contract Proposal

Chairman Borne suggested that the Commission should allocate \$1,500 per year for invasive species management. The Commissioners agreed that Ms. O'Hare's invasive species inventory at the Fresh Meadow Swamp Open Space should be continued. The Commission will go out to this property at some point.

Mary Heffernon recalled the motion voted in September. Using Open Space funds, the contractor selected for the Tyler Mill north trail blazing work should also control/remove the invasives in those areas. In discussion tonight, Chairman Borne asked Dianne Saunders to continue mapping the invasives she has found at Tyler Mill as additional background for the contract work. Dianne found that bittersweet has done tremendous damage to trees at Tyler Mill; also, Phragmites is spreading up the river. Ms. O'Hare noted that the Regional Water Authority's practice is to remove invasives for the 12 feet on either side of a trail where invasives are a problem. The Commission's consensus was to ask Ms. O'Hare to write a contract proposal for the approximate 6.4 acres of invasive species to be removed at Tyler Mill. The Commission will break the trail-blazing work out as a separate contract.

b. Foundation Grants

Dianne Saunders wrote to two foundations asking for grants for trails work and invasive species control.

c. Public Works Department

Dianne Saunders indicated that invasive plant species are being transported inadvertently in the fill material that Public Works to block entry to openings at Tyler Mill. The Commission decided to make this change known at the next Open Space Management Meeting in February.

3. DEP Beetle Control Program – Swamp Loosestrife – Tilcon

Mary Heffernon will write this letter to Tilcon.

H. Hunting

1. Posting Properties

Dianne Saunders saw hunters on the Williams property on a recent Saturday. A DEP official came out, but he said the property is huntable because it is not posted. Tonight Dianne recommended that the Commission would post the perimeter of any property on which the Commission does not want hunting.

Dianne Saunders discussed photographs of the 13 different signs in the area of Tyler Mill, plus property boundary signs. The Commission agreed to post south of Tamarac Swamp Road and from Tyler Mill Road on the east side. The DEP told Dianne that the Town has to post appropriate signage. Consensus was signs should say: "Hunting by permit as posted. See map." This message could be added to the largest signs, such as at the entrance to Vietnam Veterans Park.

Separately, DEP will provide "No Hunting" signs for the Rod & Gun Club to post as they have offered on the Williams property and north of Tamarac Swamp Road and along the west side of Tyler Mill Road.

Tonight, the Commission decided that the area maps need to be updated with the DEP. The Commission confirmed that the Tyler Mill ball fields and Bertini Park must be excluded from hunting on the DEP map. The Engineering Department should make corrected maps and forward them as new maps to the DEP. New maps will also be given to Mike Falcigno.

I. Volunteer Work Program –

1. Planning Assignment List – Boy Scouts, etc.

Mary Heffernon said that a Boy Scout is planning a Land Trust project to mark a trail on the perimeter of the farm field, known as Field #3A, above Mackenzie Reservoir. Town property borders Land Trust property, and there is a stone wall in between. It is known that people use their ATVs on both portions. Chairman Borne said the trail seems to go across the contours, and part of it is steep. The Boy Scout is interested in seeing whether the trail can be put on the Town side of the property. Mary Heffernon will organize a walk time for Commission to view area.

2. Summer Interns – Not discussed.

3. VoAg Student Projects – Not discussed.

4. College Student Project – Not discussed.

3. GRASSLAND BIRD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT/RESTORATION INITIATIVE

Not discussed.

4. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

A. Reports –

- Fawn Drive - The Town Council took no action on this property.

- On November 19th, Commissioners John Lathrop and Carl Arsenault, went out to the east Wallingford property along with Ms. O'Hare. There has been no action by the Town.

5. COMMISSION VACANCIES

Chairman Borne will call Mayor Dickinson about this matter.

6. OPEN SPACE PLAN – 1999 – Update

The Committee will meet with John and Mary in January.

7. SPEAKER EVENT

A. Topics – Not discussed.

B. Adult Education Course – Not discussed.

8. CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS

1. WalkCT, CFPA Program – www.WalkCT.org . Ms. O’Hare said this concept from the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association might be incorporated into Wallingford’s annual “Celebrate Open Space Day”.

2. “Public Benefits of Forests: What Are They Worth?”; 4th Annual CT Forest Conservation & Research Forum; Nov. 25, Storrs – This was noted.

3. Social Marketing Workshop, Sept. 9 – No report.

4. CCM Workshops “Planning for Agriculture”, Durham, December 18 – Noted.

9. NEXT MEETING – Is set for Thursday, January 8, 2009.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: John Lathrop, to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Jim Pyskaty.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary