

**Conservation Commission
Town of Wallingford
September 10, 2009**

MINUTES

The Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held on Thursday, September 10, 2009, in the Basement Conference Room of the Town Hall Municipal Building, Wallingford, Connecticut.

Seated from the Commission were Mary Heffernon, Vice Chairman, Carl Arsenault, John Lathrop, Thomas Pietras, Kenneth Ryan, Dianne Saunders, and Scott Trauner. Absent were Jeffrey Borne, Chairman, and James Pyskaty. Town staff persons present were Ms. Erin O'Hare, Environmental and Natural Resources Planner, Don Roe, Program Planner, and Recording Secretary Sonja Vining.

Mary Heffernon indicated she would act as Chairperson as Chairman Borne was on vacation.

Acting Chairperson Heffernon called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. August 13, 2009 – Regular Meeting

Motion: Mr. Lathrop to approve the Minutes of the August 13, 2009 as submitted.

Second: Mr. Ryan

Vote: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

A. Bertini Park

1. Trail system
 - a. Report, Trails Committee
 - b. Blazing contract

Acting Chairperson Ms. Heffernon presented a map and read her report dated August 5, 2009 relative to recommendations for the trail system. The Commission agreed with the recommendations. The Commission discussed the issue of lumber found in the park. At one time all of the lumber was in one place in anticipation of Public Works picking it up. The lumber was never picked up and now has been dispersed to several different areas of the park. The lumber contains nails and is a safety hazard as well as unsightly. It was decided that Ms. O'Hare would send a reminder to Henry McCully,

Public Works to see if he could find the resources and the time to gather and pick up the lumber.

B. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Trails System Improvement Program

a. DEP Recreational Trails Grant (re: southern portion) – report Don Roe

Mr. Roe indicated that he is looking for recommendations from the Commission on which trails it feels should stay and what should go in the southern portion of Tyler Mill. He stated that the grant money would be matched with \$10,000 to come from the Open Space Resource Management Fund. Ms. Saunders would like to see it go to the Engineering Department to repair the erosion of the road. The Commission requested Ms. O'Hare to pursue this.

The trails Committee will review trail system in southern portion and present its recommendations at the October meeting.

As the original contract deadline was December 2009, Mr. Roe will report on the current deadline status at the next meeting.

b. Required Maintenance

Ms. O'Hare reported that the northern part of the trail system is overgrown with autumn olive and multiflora rose and needs maintenance. She stated that Public Works does not have the time or resources to do that maintenance. The Commission discussed the possibility of hiring someone to do the work. It was mentioned that the funds could be allocated from the Open Space Fund. The possibility of having Public Works do the work during the winter was suggested. Mr. Roe feels it would be difficult for Public Works to commit because they have no idea what weather the winter will bring and if they would have time to do the work. No decision was made by the Commission. It was decided that the issue would be discussed with Henry McCully, Public Works at the Open Space Management Meeting.

Mr. Pietras would like to see a line item in the budget for trail maintenance. He feels there should be a certain amount allocated each year then the Commission could determine which area needs it the worst.

Mr. Ryan suggested the possibility of getting people who regularly use the trail to volunteer and maintain the trail. He suggested putting together a group such as "Friends of Tyler Mill".

2. Deer management proposal – report, staff

Ms. O'Hare stated that Ms. Saunders put together a very detailed report of local deer activity and general deer information that was forwarded to Howard Kilpatrick, Deer Project Leader, DEP. Mr. Kilpatrick visited Tyler Mill and submitted a report dated

9/10/09 stating that he believes the area would benefit from a deer-hunting season. Ms. O'Hare read the report for the Commission. The report mentioned archery hunting as well as firearms. The general consensus of the Commission was that, given the area, they would prefer to see only archery hunting allowed and no firearms. Mr. Roe indicated that he does not believe that the Town would be able to make a decision by hunting season this year. There was discussion about the tremendous amount of damage deer do in this area as well as many other areas in town and surrounding towns. The Commission talked about how difficult it is to prevent deer damage and repair it once it is already done. Staff will determine DEP's liability regarding bow hunting.

Motion: Mr. Lathrop to forward to the Mayor the report dated 9/10/09 from Mr. Kilpatrick, DEP regarding deer management. The Commission recommends that the hunting be limited to archery only, no firearms.

Second: Mr. Ryan

Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Pietras asked about the biological report being done on Tyler Mill. Ms. O'Hare reported that she would contact Penni Sharp, CT Botanical Society, and ask that it be put on the Society's site walk schedule. Ms. O'Hare has to find the time to walk the site with Ms. Sharp. She let it be known to the Commission that she has limited time to spend on Conservation Commission business as her main focus at this time is the work of the IWWC. Ms. O'Hare hopes that in the future she will have more time to give to the Conservation Commission but at this time certain items may have to be delegated to Commission members.

C. Farmland Lease Properties Program

1. Field 14A – 205 Main Street – encroachment – report, Law Dept.

Ms. O'Hare reported that this issue is in the courts.

2. Field 3A

- a. encroachment – report, staff

The Commission would like to have the Engineering Department re-mark the boundary lines to determine what kind of encroachment there has been. Due to Ms. O'Hare's current lack of time for the Conservation Commission, documenting tree trespass was delegated to Ms. Heffernon and Mr. Lathrop.

- b. Wallingford Land Trust request for trail use, Oct 3

Motion: Ms. Saunders to approve the use of the trail on Field 3A by the Wallingford Land Trust, October 3, 2009.

Second: Mr. Lathrop

Vote: Unanimous

3. Gates – report, Don Roe

Mr. Roe will give the fence people Ms. O'Hare's name as a contact for the installation of a gate at the farm field at Maltby Lane. He said the farmer declined a gate on Anderson Road.

4. Map updates – field maps and Town wide map

Ms. O'Hare reported that she is working on these maps. The Open Space map and the Farmlands maps will be updated.

D. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Wetlands mapping updates

Mr. Pietras prepared a sketch depicting wetland delineation boundaries at the Fresh Meadow Swamp property that had never been completed or needed tension revision to review the map. Mr. Pietras reported that there is dense vegetation that needs to be mowed. The Commission discussed the possibility of leasing some of these fields to farmers to hay and maintain and why that has not been done in the past. Mr. Pietras feels that the leasing of these fields would help the local farmers, cut maintenance cost, and also create revenue. The Commission discussed having the open space evaluated to see if it is useable farmland and if there is some benefit to keeping them fields.

Ms. Saunders stated that some residents have voiced to her an interest in creating a community garden in this area.

Mr. Pietras made the Commission aware that there is an abutting house on the southeast end of the property that is pumping water from this site. Mr. Roe will contact the Law Department to see if this issue can be addressed.

2. Mowing Plan contract – report edits

The Commission discussed the possibility of having the fields mowed more frequently than proposed in the report.

3. Walking Path Concept Plan contract – status & input

Ms. O'Hare reported that this item was on hold for now.

4. Old Gate Road property

a. Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co. activity – status & input

Ms. O'Hare reported that the project is on track and could possibility be done next week.

5. Field use/conditions/options

The Commission discussed the field use of this central area of the property. There was mention of using them as hay fields, planting grasses or leasing them out. The

Commission felt the ideal situation would be to have a Land Manager to handle items such as a mowing plan and overall maintenance of the open space. The Commission briefly reviewed the balance in the Open Space Resource Management Fund, which is currently at \$17,000. The Commission would like to have that balance reviewed and discussed at the upcoming management meeting with the Mayor. Mr. Roe clarified that the Conservation Commission, Public Works, and the Parks & Recreation Department all have access to that account.

E. Beseck Mountain

1. Cliffside Trail – boundary plantings

Ms. O'Hare reported that the Commission has approximately 18 trees, (white pine and cedar) to be planted. October is the ideal time to plant trees and she asked for direction as to where the Commission would like to see them planted besides on the south side of Cliffside Trail. A few suggestions that were made were: the entrance to Tyler Mill, the turn-around on Tamarac Swamp Road, near the Rossick Road side of the "onion field", and in the butterfly meadow on the north edge.

2. Encroachment behind 35 Wisk-Key Wind Road – report, Law Dept.

Nothing new to report. Ms. O'Hare indicated Law Dept. is going to get a police report on the incident.

Ms. O'Hare reported that she received a letter from resident Wayne Fogg stating that he would be willing to build a boardwalk over the area of the trail that stays a bit wet and gets muddy. The Commission discussed what materials should be used for the boardwalk and what kind of money would be available in the budget for this item. As "Round-Up" may impact amphibians, its use was not authorized.

Motion: Mr. Trauner to authorize Wayne Fogg to build a lumber boardwalk from the Cliffside Drive access. Mr. Fogg would be reimbursed the total expense for materials up to \$300 (with receipt).

Second: Mr. Lathrop.

Vote: Unanimous

F. Invasive Species Eradication

1. Long-term invasive species management program – updates, D. Saunders

Ms. Saunders reported that she walked Tyler Mill and on the southern end the garlic mustard has spread off the trail about 20 feet. The Red Trail is overgrown with invasives and also needs some maintenance. There is a volunteer walk scheduled for November 8th. At that walk the bittersweet should be very obvious and easy to identify.

2. Annual program expenditure

Ms. O'Hare stated that the Commission approved an annual \$1,500 expenditure for the control of invasives which has not been expended for two years. The Commission discussed the spread of "bamboo" (Japanese Knotweed) along the edge of Tyler Mill Road and the fact that if it is not removed or treated it will spread downstream. Ms. Saunders submitted photographs of area and of a vehicle that went into River.

Motion: Mr. Lathrop to authorize the spending of up to \$2,000 from the Open Space Resource Management Fund for the removal/treatment of "bamboo" and other invasives at the entrance to Tyler Mill off of Northford Road.

Second: Ms. Saunders

Vote: Unanimous

G. Volunteer Work Program – nothing to report

Acting Chairperson Ms. Heffernon added a report on Ferguson Woods. The pile of dirt that was reported by Mr. Lathrop at the last meeting was looked at by Ms. Heffernon and Mr. Arsenault. The Commission discussed again if it would like to see the area leveled and made into a parking area for entering the park. The pile of dirt/fill is blocking the trail so some action needs to be taken. The general consensus of the Commission was that area would make a nice place to pull in and park to enter the trail. There is quite a large pile of material there so the Commission is not sure what the best way of dealing with it would be. At the upcoming management meeting, the question as to why the material was placed there will be asked along with what the plans are for the material. The Commission discussed the possibility of installing signage and making that area an official entrance to the Park.

3. PROPERTY DISPOSITIONS:

1. Letters to owners of large property

Nothing new to report.

2. Dayton Pond/Muddy River dam property

Ms. O'Hare said there was no documentation forwarded on this matter but Chairman Borne had it put on agenda.

3. 112, 114, and 118 Dibble Edge Road acquisition

Acting Chairperson Heffernon presented and reviewed a map of the three lots acquired on Dibble Edge Road.

4. I-91 / Laura Lane

Ms. O'Hare reported that the Mayor sent out a memo, dated August 26, 2009, asking if the Commission would be interested in two small pieces of land on Laura Drive. After some discussion and reviewing the map the Commission decided it had no use for the property on Laurel Drive and had no recommendation.

4. GRASSLAND BIRD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT/RESTORATION INITIATIVE:

Ms. Saunders reported large group of rough-winged swallows at Field 4C all summer. She said due to rain in June, she could not tell success of bobolink nesting at Field 18A.

5. OPEN SPACE PLAN, 1999

A. Committee update – D. Saunders
Committee Chairperson Dianne Saunders said the Committee has not been able to meet since last meeting.

6. OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT MEETING, Sept. 16, 3:00 p.m.

Chairman Borne, Ms. Heffernon, and Ms. O'Hare will be in attendance.

7. PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS

A. Family Day, Saturday, September 12, 12:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Mr. Ryan, Ms. Saunders, and Ms. Heffernon will be volunteering.

B. Speaker Event – October 21

Ms. Saunders prepared and handed out a draft of the pamphlet that she plans on circulating promoting the event. The Commission reviewed the draft and made several changes. Ms. Saunders will make the recommended changes and have copies made to circulate and mail.

8. CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS

A. Mackenzie Reservoir Dredging Project

1. Request re: access road for Field 3A

Ms. O'Hare reported that Roger Dann wants the Commission to think about the access road that was installed in the, Sewer and Water Division, North Reservoir. The access road that was installed was put in the same place as the original farm road but was built up higher and wider than original. According to Roger Dann, the farmer would like the new access road to remain in place. If the road were to stay, it would be scaled down. There would be some material removed to narrow it and take down some depth. The Commission doesn't have a problem with the road being scaled down and remaining if it is going to help the farmer.

2. Request re: dredge materials for fields

Ms. O'Hare reported that Roger Dann is interested in knowing if the Commission would be interested in the dredging material for some of the Town fields. The Commission pointed out that when this project was first proposed they expressed interest in the dredging material but at that time they were told that the soils would be no good. Many issues were discussed such as the cost of the material, the price to have the material spread out on site, testing the actual nutrients in the soil, how much soil is available and how quickly the soils can be seeded before winter. The Commission

directed Ms. O'Hare to get answers for all of these questions and report back with more details. It was the consensus of the Members that it would be too late this year to bring material in and have it seeded. The Commission discussed the possibility of getting some material in the spring if it were to still be available or getting material from the West Reservoir which would give the Commission more lead time to plan and make arrangements. It was not clear if this would need a "Change of Use" permit.

B. Quinnipiac River boat launch proposal – status, staff
Nothing new to report.

C. America the Beautiful Grant application
Ms. O'Hare indicated she will not be available to pursue this grant by the September 30 deadline.

D. Other
Ms. Heffernon asked about correspondence with Tilcon. Ms. O'Hare reported that there is no actual letter but she has notes that she would go over with Ms. Heffernon if she wanted. Ms. Heffernon indicated that it was her understanding that Tilcon was waiting for a response from the Commission. Ms. Heffernon would take over the issue and respond to Tilcon.

Ms. O'Hare indicated CFPA is seeking A Town representative to attend the New England National Scenic Trail Stewardship Council Meeting, October 13, at the Hillstead Museum, Farmington (invitation is forthcoming). A representative will be appointed.

9. NEXT MEETING – October 10, 2009

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: Mr. Lathrop to adjourn.

Second: Mr. Arsenault

Vote: Unanimous

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

Respectfully submitted,

Sonja Vining
Recording Secretary