

**Conservation Commission
Town of Wallingford
October 14, 2010
MINUTES**

The Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held on, Thursday, October 14, 2010, in the Basement Conference Room of the Town Hall Municipal Building, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, Connecticut.

Seated from the Commission were Chairman Jeffrey Borne, Vice Chairperson Mary Heffernon, Carl Arsenault, Tom Pietras, Kenneth Ryan, and Dianne Saunders.

Town staff people present were Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner, and Recording Secretary Sonja Vining.

Absent: John Lathrop, Dianne Lendler, and James Pyskaty

Chairman Borne called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. September 9, 2010 – Regular Meeting

Mary Heffernon asked Ms. O'Hare to get an opinion from the Law Department on whether or not the first paragraph of these Minutes could be eliminated. *Ms. O'Hare will contact Janis Small to see if the Minutes can be modified in that way.*

The following changes were made to the Minutes of September 9, 2010:

- Page 1 – 2.A.2 – last sentence to read, “Ms. Saunders would like invasive plant eradication work itemized and prioritized by the bidder.”
- Page 4 – 2.B.3 – delete last sentence, “Ms. Saunders stated that she would e-mail Commissioners to take votes on items that need action on for the Farmland Lease Program.”

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon to approve the Minutes of the September 9, 2010 Regular Meeting as corrected.

SECOND: Mr. Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Ravine restoration (west of Field 7A) - report

Ms. O'Hare spoke to Roman Mrozinski, Southwest Conservation, regarding this ravine. He indicated that there was a plan developed several years ago that he gave to Brent Smith. Ms. O'Hare and Rob Baltramaitis, Assistant Town Engineer visited the site. Mr. Baltramaitis is working on a plan and will contact both the NRCS and Mr. Mrozinski to get their input.

2. DEP Recreational Trails Grant work – status

Not taken up, to be discussed at the November meeting.

3. Entranceway – invasive plant eradication – status

Ms. O'Hare circulated photos of the area. She reported that the Japanese knotweed is just about gone.

4. Signage re: hunting - status

5. Footbridge damage repair - report

6. Use of blocks in lieu of fencing/gates

7. Kiosks – signage content

8. Tamarac Swamp work

Items 4 through 8, listed above, were not taken up, they will be discussed at the November meeting.

B. Farmland Lease Properties Program

Chairman Borne discussed a memorandum he received from Ms. O'Hare regarding the overwhelming workload relative to requested Commission work. The Farmland Lease Committee issues take up a great deal of her time. Mr. Borne feels that the Commission should give Ms. O'Hare some direction on prioritizing the work that it gives to her as she has requested. Ms. O'Hare feels that things would be much easier and take up less of her time if there was consistency with the farmland lease agreements. The enforcement of the lease agreements was discussed.

Issues with Field 4A and 19A were discussed. There are areas of the fence that are not up, allowing cows to escape and create a safety hazard for traffic in the area. The cows have now been removed from the field. There was discussion about the possibility of keeping Field 19A as hay only. After lengthy discussion, the Commission determined that there are six areas of fencing along Scard Road that are to be repaired by the Lessee along with the replacement of the temporary fence by the brush pile that is to be moved 8 feet. *Ms. O'Hare will direct the Lessee to repair the fence in the six areas agreed upon by the Commission as well as repair and relocate the temporary fence. Ms. O'Hare will keep the Farmland Lease Committee up to date on this issue. A further determination will be made in the spring.*

1. Fields 2A, 2B, & 2C – No. Branford Rd. stormwater drainage – report

Ms. O'Hare circulated photos of the stormwater drainage project. Field 2C is fine. Ms. Saunders stated that Field 2A and 2B has been damaged by large equipment has been driven through the center of the fields. She presented photos to the Commission. Ms. O'Hare presented photos of that portion of the hayfield that has been disturbed.

2. Lease amendment for Fields 1B & 1C – status

Ms. O'Hare stated that there is an area behind Field 1C that has been disturbed and that area is not included in the lease. After some discussion the Commission agreed that, in the spring, shrubs would be planted on the lease line to create a clear delineation for the Lessee.

Ms. O'Hare has been preparing a report on the amendment issue, but has not completed it yet. She circulated the Draft report with photos of various plants growing in Field 1B. She indicated that she is fine with the field being mowed but not with the use of herbicides unless the Commission decides to take the lease program in a new direction. Ms. Saunders indicated that she agrees with Ms. O'Hare on the mowing but she feels that the use of herbicides would be fine if the Lessee found it necessary. She stated that the Farmland Lease Committee has no intention on taking the lease program in a new direction. Ms. Saunders agreed with Ms. O'Hare that things have become much too complicated. After further discussion the Commission agreed that rather than amend the lease to have the Lessee mow the field, the field would be mowed by the Town Public Works Department. The mowing schedule would be updated to include Field 1B.

3. Farmland Lease Properties Committee – report, D. Saunders

Ms. Saunders reported that the Farmland Lease Committee met last week. She submitted to Ms. O'Hare the mid-season field monitoring reports that have been completed and the final report on Fields 1A and 1C. There are a couple of reports still outstanding. Mr. Pietras indicated that the lessees' biggest concern is about the next bid cycle. All of the lease agreements end in 2011. Some issues to be considered when redoing the leases would be how to handle the hedgerow, wetland issues, the use of chemicals, and the addition or deletion of fields. Ms. Saunders would like bids to be ready by September 2011.

Ms. O'Hare discussed Field 7F where she stated that the Lessee is getting into cultivating the wetlands. She presented photos of the area where she believes herbicides have been applied in the wetland area. Ms. O'Hare presented a map of the field stating that the Lessee has gone beyond the lease area. There was discussion about the location of the tree line on the map in comparison to the actual tree line in the field which is different. She stated that the farming activity has also gone too close to the stream. Ms. Saunders disagreed with Ms. O'Hare and also submitted photos of the area. Mr. Pietras stated that some fields are not clearly defined. He believes that the Lessee is most likely farming areas that have been farmed in the past. It was suggested that the area be staked to make it clear to the Lessee what the boundary is for his activity. The Commission feels that Ms. O'Hare should clarify the map and speak to the Lessee to make clear the limits of his activity and the areas that he should stay out of.

After further discussion it was determined that the best way to handle the matter would be to walk the site and the other leased areas with the Lessee and point out the actual boundary lines for activity. *Ms. O'Hare would contact the Lessee to set up a date for a site walk for Fields 7E, 7F, 1B, 1C, and 5A. She would notify the Conservation Commission and the Farmland Lease Committee when the date was set.*

4. Letter to lessees

Not taken up, to be discussed at the November meeting.

5. Sugarbush lease

Ms. O'Hare stated that she has not had the opportunity to review the lease.

C. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Southern border – encroachment/possible tree removal

Ms. O'Hare circulated photos of the area abutting 13 Rosick Road. The area has been surveyed and staked. She was told by the property owner that a large tree fell and destroyed the town hedgerow and during the clean-up process some of the hedgerow had to be removed. Ms. O'Hare indicated that within that hedgerow she found three small tree stumps and lots of debris. Ms. O'Hare, Chairman Borne, Mr. Ryan and Mr. Lathrop visited the site and placed 16 stakes where the Town should plant new trees. Sixteen trees (white pines and cedars) were planted by the Public Works Department where marked out by the Commissioners. There was discussion about what action to take against the neighbor. The Commission decided that at this time there would be no action taken.

Ms. Saunders stated that she found a deer stand in the Town land off Cooke Road, which is non-hunting property. Ms. Saunders provided Ms. O'Hare with photographs of the area where the deer stand was found. *Ms. O'Hare will send a memo to Henry McCully directing him to remove it from the property.*

D. Bertini Park

1. Low Ropes Challenge Course – status

Not taken up, to be discussed at the November meeting.

E. Lufbery Park

1. Frisbee course – status

Not taken up, to be discussed at the November meeting.

F. Beseck Mountain

1. National Scenic Trail Stewardship Council meeting, Sept. 30, report, K. Ryan

Mr. Ryan briefly reported on the meeting, stating that the trail is now eligible for federal grant funding. A resource for more information is www.newenglandtrail.org.

G. Fireworks Island/Quinnipiac River & Community Lake Park

2. Canoe/kayak ramps - status

Not taken up, to be discussed at the November meeting.

H. 18 Mohican Lane – tree removal – report

Ms. O'Hare reported that that Corporation Counsel Adam Mantzaris was handling this matter. She read from a memo addressed to her from Adam Mantzaris, dated September 30, 2010. He would like the property posted and for representatives to go assess trees represented as being dangerous. *Henry McCully and Ms. O'Hare will visit the site. Ms. O'Hare would email the Commissioners with a date for the site visit.*

I. West Dayton Hill Road Dam property – report

Ms. O'Hare reported that things are moving forward and the Engineering Department was in charge.

J. Invasive Species Eradication

1. Long-term invasive species management program – update, D. Saunders
2. Site for annual expenditure
3. Community Garden policy

Items 1 through 3 were not taken up, they will be discussed at the November meeting.

K. Mowing

1. Committee report

Mr. Arsenault has been working with Henry McCully regarding the mowing schedule. Fresh Meadow Swamp property is almost all mowed now.

2. Report on field investigation with Oswald Schmidt, ecologist, Yale School of Environmental Studies, Sept. 29

No taken up, to be discussed at the November meeting.

L. Volunteer Work Program – report, K. Ryan

Not taken up.

M. Tree planting – report

Discussed earlier under 2.c., above.

N. Stewardship – proposed assignment of properties

Not taken up.

3. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

1. Report

Not taken up.

4. OPEN SPACE PLAN, 1999 – update, D. Saunders

Not taken up.

5. PUBLIC OUTREACH

A. Family Day, September 18 – report

Ms. Heffernon reported that the event went well. Many maps were handed out.

6. CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS

- A. "Parks: Our Neighborhood Forests", CT Urban Forest Council; MountainRidge; Nov. 3, 8 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.**

To be discussed at the November meeting.

B. Proposed watershed protection districts

Ms. O'Hare briefly discussed the issue of the updating of the map and the regulations for the watershed protection districts as approved at the October Planning & Zoning meeting.

C. DEP Hotline for Wildlife Issues – 806-424-3333

To be discussed at the November meeting.

7. **NEXT MEETING** – November 18, 2010

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon to adjourn.

SECOND: Mr. Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonja Vining
Recording Secretary