

**Conservation Commission
Town of Wallingford
November 18, 2010
MINUTES**

The Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held 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, John Lathrop, James Pyskaty and Dianne Saunders.

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

Absent: Dianne Lendler

Chairman Borne called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

The Commission heard from Jerry Mateskevitch who discussed areas that he feels need to be worked on in the Tyler Mill Preserve. He reviewed a color-coded map he created showing the areas most in need of some maintenance. He indicated that there are fields that are overgrown, fields with no edges and no wildflowers and all of these things negatively affect the wildlife in the area. The area of most concern is the area near the bridge and the old foundation.

Ms. Heffernon indicated that the Commission is aware of the issues and is working on addressing some of them with available grant money. Chairman Borne thanked him for the work involved in his proposal.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. October 14, 2010 – Regular Meeting

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon to approve the Minutes of the October 15, 2010 meeting.

SECOND: Mr. Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Ms. O'Hare indicated that there was nothing new to report.

2. DEP Recreational Trails Grant work – status

Ms. Heffernon stated that the paperwork may be submitted by the end of the month. She reviewed the trail map to be submitted. The Commission felt that the Pink Trail should be included in the bid package but regarding the stream crossing issue, contractors' recommendations alone will be sought.

3. Vernal pool fencing options

Ms. Heffernon reported that Roman Mrozinski suggested that cut cedars could be used to create natural fencing or a split rail fence could also be used to protect the vernal pools. She thought a "Friends of Tyler Mill" volunteer group may be a good idea for the future. The Commission felt that the split rail fence would be the best way to go as long as Henry McCully agreed.

4. Footbridge damage repair – report

Ms. O'Hare reported that Henry McCully told her that the footbridge repair would be a winter project for the Department of Public Works.

5. Use of blocks in lieu of fencing/gates

Ms. O'Hare discussed the possibility of using designed blocks in place of some of the farm gates in town. Ms. Saunders indicated that the Farmland Lease Committee (FLC) feels the use of blocks or boulders is not successful. She presented some photos of where they have been used. The use of blocks alone does not work but in some cases the blocks along with a gate have been successful, or an I-beam gate with double guardrails. She suggested, moving forward, maintenance of access gates should be part of the lessee's responsibility.

MOTION: Mr. Lathrop to approve the use of boundaries and a double gate at the entrance to fields 2A & 2B if agreed upon by the Department of Public Works.

SECOND: Mr. Arsenault

VOTE: Unanimous

6. Kiosks – signage content

Not taken up.

7. Tamarac Swamp work

Mr. Arsenault will visit the site to see if the markings previously placed on the trees and shrubs to be removed are still visible.

Ms. Saunders showed aerial photos of the area from the CT ECO website.

B. Farmland Lease Properties Program

1. Vehicle trespass damage – Fields 2A, 2B, & 8B

Ms. Saunders presented photos showing damage done by vehicles. She indicated that in Field 1B the town did some work and took out topsoil and graded the existing new swale flat which has stopped the drainage in the area. In Field 6B, Ms. Saunders stated that there is paving equipment being parked in the farm field. She presented photos showing the paving box in the field. *Ms. O'Hare will contact Henry McCully to have him restore the swale and be sure that the paving equipment is no longer parked in the field.*

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

3. Fields 1A, 1C, 5A, 7E, and 7F – Oct. 29 site visit report

Mr. Arsenault and Mr. Pyskaty submitted their field monitoring reports to Ms. O'Hare. Ms. Saunders submitted a report to the Commission from the Farmland Lease Committee dated November 18, 2010, and reviewed it in detail. The FLC would like to see the maps re-done for the new leases where there would be areas designated as maintenance areas to be maintained by the lessee. Other areas on the map would be labeled as critical habitat areas to limit activity. Field 5A was specifically discussed. The Committee feels that the map should be changed to allow for areas to be maintained by the farmers leasing the property. Ms. O'Hare disagreed, as farmers should not be allowed to go outside the lease area as outlined on the map. Ms. Saunders stated that the goal of the FLC is to keep open space open and not allow it to be overtaken by woody growth while promoting local agriculture and that this should be done by NRCS best practices.

Ms. O'Hare stated that she would have issues with using herbicide and mowing or maintaining the areas in and around wetlands not with a lease area.

Mr. Ryan feels that the FLC should develop proposed maintenance regulations for the individual fields and give them to Ms. O'Hare for her review. Ms. Saunders indicated that in the memo handed out this evening the FLC has done that. *Chairman Borne asked Ms. Saunders to prepare field maps to depict the changes proposed by the FLC.*

(Chairman Borne left the meeting at this time and Vice Chairperson Heffernon took over as Acting Chairperson at approximately 9:15 p.m.)

Ms. Saunders stated that the FLC is working on new proposed language for the leases and it would be ready in January. She asked that the Commission vote on the FLC report handed out this evening. The Commission did not feel comfortable voting on a report that was just distributed. They would take the issue up in December after they have had time to digest the information. Ms. O'Hare is to set up a meeting between the Mayor and the FLC to discuss four previously identified issues. .

There was discussion about if the access road (that runs parallel to North Branford Road) on Field 1C should be left in or taken out for use as access. Ms. O'Hare reported on Rod & Gun Club access easement location. *Ms. Saunders will get clarification from the lessee regarding his request relative to the access road.*

4. Letter to lessees

Ms. Saunders stated that the letter, which was never approved, may not be necessary now.

C. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Tessa Arsenault's trail work

Mr. Arsenault reported that the trail is work in progress. Mr. Ryan has walked the trail and is very happy with the work that has been done. He looks forward to it being completed.

D. Beseck Mountain

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

Reported on last month.

E. Fireworks Island/Quinnipiac River & Community Lake Park

1. Canoe/kayak ramps - status

Nothing new to report.

F. 18 Mohican Lane – tree removal – report

Ms. O'Hare reported that almost all the wood was taken off the Town land by the property owner who cut Town trees as approved by the Law Department to do so. The property boundary has been posted in the area of the violation.

G. West Dayton Hill Road Dam property – report

Nothing new to report.

H. Cooke Road property – deer stand trespass – report

Ms. O'Hare reported with Ms. Saunders that the deer stand has been taken down. She presented photos.

I. Invasive Species Eradication

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

Ms. Saunders reported that the focus at this time is on early detection of small outcroppings of invasive species. She attended two conferences recently and will submit a report soon.

2. Site for annual expenditure

Nothing new to report.

3. Community Garden policy

Nothing new to report.

J. Mowing

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

Ms. Saunders submitted a report to the Commission of the field investigation she attended with Ms. O'Hare, Ms. Lendler, and Professor Schmidt.

K. Volunteer Work Program – report, K. Ryan

Ms. O'Hare reported that she met the new wildlife teacher from the Lyman Hall VoAg program, (Emily Picard), who informed her that she has students who are required to have a certain amount of supervised agricultural experience. The Commission discussed the possibility of using those students to do some of the work required to maintain the trails.

3. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

1. Report

Nothing new to report.

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

Not taken up.

5. PUBLIC OUTREACH

Not taken up.

6. MEETING SCHEDULE 2011 – approval

MOTION: Mr. Lathrop to approve the 2011 Meeting Schedule as presented.

SECOND: Mr. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

7. CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS

A. CACIWC membership renewal

MOTION: Mr. Ryan to approve paying \$50 toward the renewal of the Town's CACIWC membership.

SECOND: Mr. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

B. CACIWC Conference, MountainRidge, November 13, 2010 - report

Ms. Saunders reported she attend the conference.

C. Southwest Conservation District newsletter

D. Sixth Annual CT Forest Forum Conference, "From Conversation to Conservation", UCONN Hartford campus, Nov. 23, 2010

E. NOFA Organic Land Care Program Annual Gathering, "Corridors to Sustainability: Designing Within the Natural Context", Dec. 7, 2010, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

F. Law Department response regarding Minutes query

Ms. O'Hare presented to the Commission the response she got from the Legal Department when she inquired about the elimination of the first paragraph of the Minutes. Attorney Small had indicated that it is customary to note where the meetings take place.

8. NEXT MEETING: December 9, 2010

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Pyskaty to adjourn.

SECOND: Mr. Lathrop

VOTE: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:55 p.m.