

**Conservation Commission
Town of Wallingford
January 14, 2010**

MINUTES

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

Seated from the Commission were Chairperson Jeffrey Borne, Vice Chairperson Mary Heffernon, Carl Arsenault, Kenneth Ryan, Tom Pietras, and Dianne Saunders. Absent were: John Lathrop, James Pyskaty, and Scott Trauner
Town staff people present were Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner, and Recording Secretary Sonja Vining.

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. December 10, 2009 – Regular Meeting

Ms. Heffernon made a correction on Page 4, F1 – Borne was spelled incorrectly.

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon to approve the Minutes of the December 10, 2009 meeting as corrected.

SECOND: Mr. Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous

Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner announced to the Commission that Mr. William Dellacamera, representing Cecarelli Farm, was present to discuss Field 7A which is Item B5 on the agenda. Chairman Borne indicated that the Commission would hear Mr. Dellacamera's presentation and then move forward with the rest of the agenda.

2. PROPERTY MANGEMENT:

B. Farmland Lease Properties Program

5. Field 7A – improvement proposal – status, staff

Mr. Dellacamera handed out a packet of material to each Commissioner including The Cecarelli Farm proposal for Field 7A, and information on the forage radish and sunflowers. He gave some history on the Farm, the farming operation as well as the farmland in the area. He is aware that Field 7A is currently not being used and is interested in farming whatever portion the Town would feel appropriate, given the current erosion issue in the rear of the site. Mr. Dellacamera stated that his farming operation is down approximately 33 acres. He explained the reasons he has not continued to farm certain fields, none of which have to do with the management of the Cecarelli Farm operation. What is being proposed in Field 7A is sweet corn or winter squash.

The Commission discussed the erosion issue that was created to the rear of Field 7A. Mr. Pietras wrote a letter to the IWWC that Ms. O'Hare forwarded to the Engineering Department regarding the need for some work to be done in the rear of that field. The repair of the erosion would be a Town project since it is Town land. The Commission would like the Engineering Department to walk the site and develop a plan for the erosion that is occurring. Once a plan is developed it would be brought to the Commission for review and finally to the IWWC for a permit.

Tom Pietras suggested the use of riprap and perhaps a small basin with logs crossing the channel. There was some discussion of the use of field stone versus riprap on this site. It was thought that the Engineering Department would most likely recommend the use of riprap. Mr. Pietras indicated that he would contact the Engineering Department to schedule a site walk. Ms. Saunders reported she had walked the Tyler Mill Road problem area with the Engineering Department.

Ms. O'Hare told the Commission that she would need to have the wetlands mapped before going before the IWWC for a permit. Mr. Pietras stated that there would be no impact to the wetlands. The site has what would be considered a man-made intermittent watercourse. Ms. O'Hare explained that the IWWC would regulate the area within 50 feet on either side of the watercourse.

Mr. Dellacamera reviewed some information in his packet that discussed a new piece of equipment called a Haybuster that is capable of planting seed into just about anything. He plans on using this equipment to plant the fields and break through the hardpan. He discussed his plan to start using a combination of forage radish and rye as a cover crop for Fields 7A and 5A (currently under lease). He reviewed data that he provided for the Commissioners on the benefits and uses of forage radishes as a cover. Forage radish is an annual that would have to be planted every year because the seed winterkills. He also would rotate areas in cultivation.

Mr. Pietras asked when the farm leases are up. Ms. O'Hare indicated that the leases are five-year leases that are up for re-leasing for 2012. There are currently five fields available in Wallingford. Mr. Dellacamera is currently interested in Fields 7A, 7E, 7F, 1A and 1C. Mr. Pietras inquired if the farmers had been required to rotate their planting of hay and corn crops so as to not deplete the soil. Ms. O'Hare believes that prior to her employment that was included in some of the lease documents but she is not sure it actually happened that way in practice. Mr. Dellacamera stated that he would have no problem with alternating crops since it benefits the soil, which ultimately would benefit the farming operation. Ms. Saunders indicated that currently the lease term is five years but the State DEP has been contacted to see if it would be amenable to a 10- year lease term.

The Commission discussed with Mr. Dellacamera the difference between Round- Up and Rodeo. Mr. Dellacamera was very knowledgeable in this area and is very conscience of what should and should not be used so as to not negatively effect amphibians. Ms. Saunders pointed out that in Field 5A there were so many chemicals used that it killed off all life, earthworms and insects included. Mr. Dellacamera explained how the use of forage radish would aerate the soil, which would help in that area. He stated that Field 5A is a good field and is coming back to life.

Mr. Dellacamera explained the process a farm goes through in ordering seed in advance, to prepare for the growing season. He expressed the importance of knowing as soon as possible what fields would be available to him so he could schedule his seed and planting for this growing season.

Mr. Pietras briefly reviewed the individual fields available. Field 1A has a sloping issue, Field 1C has a more severe sloping issue, Field 7E and 7F are relatively flat but heavy in clay and Field 7A has the erosion issue that has to be resolved with a plan from Engineering and implemented by Public Works.

Although the rear of Field 7A needs maintenance, the Commission felt that the front could be leased out for farming. Mr. Dellacamera suggested planting a few rows of sunflowers to the rear of the site. He presented the Commissioners with some material to read regarding the use of sunflowers. The sunflowers could be planted with the zone tiller along with hay underneath to stabilize the soil.

Ms. O'Hare felt that Fields 7A, 7E, and 7F seemed fine for Mr. Dellacamera but Fields 1A and 1C are designated for hay only. If Cecarelli Farm were granted a lease, it could be a 7-year lease so all leases would be on the same renewal schedule. If the DEP were to approve a 10-year lease subsequently, then the Cecarelli Farm lease could be properly adjusted. If 7A were leased it would be divided, front and rear, so the front portion could be farmed and the Town would maintain the rear. Mr. Dellacamera

indicated that even if the rear portion of the Field were not to be a part of the lease, he would be willing to use his equipment to plant sunflowers or a wildflower mix if the Town wanted to take that approach to stabilize the area.

Mr. Dellacamera inquired about the removal of some autumn olive in Field 5A. He indicated that he would like to remove it because it is encroaching into the active farm field. The Commission felt that, generally it would be fine to have him remove it. Mr. Dellacamera was directed to contact Ms. O'Hare who would in turn contact the Commissioners and set up a site walk to mark the plants that are to be removed.

Mr. Dellacamera also stated that the entrance to Field 5A needs some maintenance and some stone installed to fill in the ruts. Ms. O'Hare indicated that she would send out a memo to Public Works notifying them that there is some maintenance needed at that entrance.

Ms. Saunders asked that Ms. O'Hare include in her memo the fact that two of the farm gates in the area are lying on the ground and need to be put back in place before they get stolen.

Mr. Dellacamera indicated that there was a water pipe in the area of Field 5A. He would like to find out the depth to be sure that none of his farming activity would interfere with the function of that pipe. Ms. O'Hare indicated that she would get that information from the Water & Sewer Division and forward it to Mr. Dellacamera.

The restriction of hay in Fields 1A and 1C was discussed further. It was stated that Roger Dann of the Water Division had advocated for the restriction on those Fields that only hay could be planted. The Commission felt that perhaps it could look into lifting that restriction with the understanding that zone tillage and a cover crop be required on those Fields.

Mr. Dellacamera concluded by stating that Cecarelli Farm understands and appreciates the importance of maintaining the soil. The Farm is always looking to the future and is anxious to work with the Town to maintain and even improve the farmland that is left in Wallingford.

The Farmland Lease Committee, consisting of Chairperson Ms. Saunders, Mr. Pietras, Mr. Arsenault and Mr. Pyskaty, will schedule a meeting to review the leases on the five fields discussed. The Farm Lease Committee will review the proposal of Cecarelli Farm and make a recommendation to the Conservation Commission.

H. Volunteer Work Program

Ms. Heffernon and Mr. Ryan have been working with a local Girl Scout Troop who is interested in doing some work in the area of the Butterfly Meadow. Mr. Ryan reported that they are proposing several items such as building a footbridge, and installing benches, chickadee boxes, and butterfly boxes. The Girl Scouts have submitted a plan for the footbridge that they are proposing. An IWWC permit is required for this activity. Ms. Heffernon had gotten an application and passed it on to Mr. Ryan who will forward it to the Girl Scouts. Three quotes were submitted to Mr. Ryan for the building materials required for the footbridge. The costs for materials range from \$106 - \$223. The point was made that the Girl Scouts have to be aware that any bird boxes that are installed must be able to be cleaned out. Plans can be found on the Audubon Society website.

Mr. Ryan explained that the process would be to first get approval from the Conservation Commission, have the Conservation Commission agree to pay for the materials, and, lastly, to schedule a site walk to review the details of what is being proposed. Ms. Saunders suggested to Mr. Ryan that he be sure that there is some type of plan to bolt the bridge down or fasten it to piers to prevent any vandalism. Ms. O'Hare wanted to be sure there is enough clearance under the footbridge for the high water flow in spring.

The Girl Scouts would like to complete the project by Earth Day in April.

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon made a motion to support the proposal submitted by the Girl Scouts for work to be conducted in the Butterfly Meadow and have the Conservation Commission pay for materials not to exceed \$500.

SECOND: Mr. Arsenault

VOTE: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. DEP Recreational Trails Grant (re: southern portion) – report, D. Roe

(Not taken up).

2. Deer management – aerial population survey proposal, J. Gawlak

Chairman Borne submitted for the file a copy of a letter dated October 1, 2009 from the Deer Management Commission of Wilton regarding controlled hunting in preserves.

3. Signage

Nothing new to report.

4. Boundary marking along New England Drive.

Nothing new to report.

B. Farmland Lease Properties Program

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

No discussion.

2. Field 3A – encroachment – report, Law Dept.

Nothing new to report.

3. Gates – locks – report, D. Roe

4. Field 4A – report, D Saunders

Ms. Saunders has contacted Mr. Wall but has not heard back yet.

5. Field 7A – improvement proposal – status, staff

Discussed earlier.

C. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Improvements for winter activities – report, Chairman Borne

There still have not been any barriers installed at the Galko pond parking area. Chairman Borne will forward a letter to the Mayor, Mr. McCully and Mr. Gawlak.

D. Beseck Mountain

1. Cliffside Trail – boundary plantings

No discussion

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

No discussion.

E. Ferguson Woods

1. Former driveway – report, M. Heffernon

Ms. Heffernon indicated Public Works has removed half of the material from the driveway.

2. Former Poder parcel – site walk

Site walk to be scheduled.

F. 1250 Whirlwind Hill Road

1. maintenance – leasing

(Not taken up).

G. Invasive Species Eradication

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

Ms. Saunders reported that the volunteers have been sending in their sheets. There are two people who would like to steward a trail. Ms. Saunders will give them the trail of their choice.

2. Annual program expenditure

(Not taken up).

H. Volunteer Work Program

Discussed earlier.

3. PROPERTY DISPOSITIONS:

1. Letters to owners of large property and other approaches
2. Other

The Commission tentatively scheduled a site walk for Sunday, January 17, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. for a parcel on the east side of town.

4. OPEN SPACE PLAN, 1999

A. Committee update, D. Saunders

(Not taken up).

5. CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS

A. State of CT Conservation and Development Plan – interim change request

Discussed briefly.

B. Police Department policy re: Injured animals

The Commissioners received a copy of the policy of the Wallingford Police Department regarding injured animals. The Commission discussed the policy. Some Members felt that it was vague as to how to determine if the animal should be put down or not. There was not a lot of guidance on how to handle an injured wild animal.

C. Other

Ms. Heffernon announced that there is a 25th Anniversary Celebration for the Mayor on February 6, 2010, at 6:00 p.m. at the Villa Capri.

Ms. Saunders encouraged the Commissioners to read the material and visit the web sites included in her e-mail that she sent out to each of them.

Mr. Pietras asked Ms. O'Hare the status of the wetland maps that he prepared and submitted to her regarding seven open space parcels. He stated that the intent was to get them on GIS maps. Ms. O'Hare indicated the Town does not have GIS and that the process of revising the farmland lease area maps was temporarily placed on hold but she will see that the work is completed.

6. NEXT MEETING: - February 11, 2010

7. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon to adjourn.

SECOND: Mr. Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonja Vining
Recording Secretary