

**Conservation Commission
Town of Wallingford
February 11, 2010
MINUTES**

The Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held on, February 11, 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, John Lathrop, James Pyskaty, Kenneth Ryan, Tom Pietras, and Dianne Saunders. Absent was: Carl Arsenault

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. January 14, 2010 – Regular Meeting

Ms. Heffernon requested that the margins be pushed out.

Chairman Borne made several corrections:

Page 1, Item 2. – correct the spelling of MANAGEMENT

Page 2, second paragraph, first sentence to read “The Commission discussed the erosion issue that has occurred to the rear of Field 7A”.

Page 2, second paragraph, second sentence to read “Mr. Borne 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”.

Page 2, third paragraph, third sentence to be deleted.

Page 2, fifth paragraph, third sentence to read “He discussed his plan to possibly start using a combination of forage radish and rye as a cover crop for Fields 7A and 5A”.

Page 3, second paragraph, second sentence, correct the spelling of conscious.

Ms. Saunders indicated that on Page 8, Section C, the second paragraph should be deleted.

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon to approve the Minutes of the January 14, 2010 meeting as corrected.

SECOND: Ms. Saunders

VOTE: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Sugaring use

Mr. Doug Pepe was present to discuss his sugaring use at Tyler Mill Preserve.

Ms. Saunders described the sugaring activity she had seen in the Tyler Mill Preserve. She stated that she had talked to Mr. Pepe and explained to him that what he was doing was not allowed and that he was in violation.

Mr. Pepe stated that he bought the property at 9 Anderson Road in 1983. He began tapping trees on his property. Approximately 6 years ago he began tapping in Tyler Mill. He indicated that he believed there was a prior use there. Once he became aware, after Ms. Saunders spoke to him, that there was a problem, he made some phone calls in an attempt to clear things up. Mr. Pepe uses an existing farm road to access his tank. There is a barbed-wire gate where he enters and to access his tank he must cross a small stream. He goes in 5-10 times a season with a tractor. Mr. Pepe showed on the map where his taps and tank are and the route he takes to get there. Mr. Pepe would like to continue to sugar so he would like to apply for a permit or something that would allow him to continue. Mr. Pepe has 24 trees tapped with a total of approximately 40 taps.

Ms. O'Hare suggested that the gate to that area be posted with a sign. Since Mr. Pepe stated that he worked for the Regional Water Authority, Ms. O'Hare asked what they charge for such activity on their property. Mr. Pepe believes that the charge is \$25/year and \$0.25/tap. Mr. Pepe was asked what he does with the syrup that he makes and he indicated that he has sold some.

Mr. Pepe indicated that he has seen ATV activity entering that gate and has repaired the gate himself in the past. He stated that, at this time, he has stopped all of his sugaring activity on the site.

Chairman Borne thanked Mr. Pepe for coming in and told him that the Commission would be discussing it later in the evening and would contact him with any decision that was made. Mr. Pepe chose to stay for the majority of the meeting.

2. Deer management – Jerry Matuskiewicz

Mr. Matuskiewicz was present to discuss deer management.

Chairman Borne made it clear to Mr. Matuskiewicz that Wallingford has not made any decisions regarding deer management. He indicated that the Town is in the process of gathering information.

Mr. Matuskiewicz reported that he has conducted his own study of the Tyler Mill/Bertini area where he believes there are approximately 25 deer. He stated he is an experienced hunter and knows what to look for as far as damage caused by the deer population. He feels that the Tyler Mill area is just used for bedding and the deer are not staying in the area to feed. He mentioned several areas in Town that currently allow deer hunting. Mr. Matuskiewicz doesn't want to see this area opened up to deer hunting. Being a hunter himself he feels that opening this area would be dangerous and it would create many other issues that the Town would have to address. Mr. Matuskiewicz is familiar with the system they use in the Town of Wilton and briefly discussed it with the Commission. He doesn't see the need to open up any more areas for hunting since he doesn't believe that there are as many deer in Town as people seem to think.

Chairman Borne stressed again that the Commission is still just in the stage where it is gathering information. It was reported that the aerial survey relative to deer density of the Tyler Mill area was scheduled to take place this week.

Ms. O'Hare submitted for the file, notes she took when speaking to the Regional Water Authority this week regarding RWA deer management.

3. Ravine restoration – behind Field 7A

The history of this field and wetlands was discussed in detail. Ms. Saunders provided several photos of the area. The Commission has been aware of the issues in this field as far back as 2004 when there was no cover crop planted.

Ms. O'Hare reported that she walked the site Tuesday with Rob Baltramaitis, Assistant Town Engineer. As she understands it, the Engineering Department will be developing a plan but before it can do that there needs to be input from the Conservation Commission regarding how much disturbance the Commission would find acceptable - 30 feet of streambank repair done or if it wants work done all the way down to the Muddy River, which would require heavy equipment. Mr. Pietras has spoken to Mr. Baltramaitis and would like to walk the site again with him and discuss which direction to go as far as repairing the erosion. Mr. Pietras indicated that he would prepare some sketches of the area and contact Mr. Baltramaitis to schedule a site walk.

Ms. O'Hare indicated that the restoration plan needs to be completed before the paperwork is done for the leasing of the field as the several repairs needed will decrease the lease area. There was discussion about the possibility of not leasing Field 7A at this time. Ms. Saunders pointed out either way the field must be planted to stabilize it. The possibility of having Public Works mow the field was discussed. It was felt that if that happens the field must be marked clearly so the buffer and wetlands don't get mowed. The Commission discussed the amount of work that would have to be done to fill in the three eroded areas and the ditches that seem to have been dug by a backhoe. Mr. Pietras feels that the field should be pulled from the lease bid proposal so a full study could be done and a plan developed. He will tie ribbons to mark where a double row of hay bales would be installed to control sediment. After further discussion it was determined that Field 7A would be pulled from the lease bid proposal at this time. It was thought that if a plan were developed and/or implemented in a timely manner it would be possible to lease the field later in the season.

4. DEP Recreational Trails Grant – status

Nothing new to report.

5. Bike race request

Mr. Steve Barton had contacted John Gawlak requesting that he be allowed to conduct a bike race in the Tyler Mill Preserve in late July-August. Some history was given on past bike races. The general feeling of the Commission was that they would not promote the race but they would like to hear what Mr. Barton is proposing. The Commission suggested that if Mr. Barton is still interested in this race he should present his ideas in front of the Commission.

6. Entranceway – proposed Water Division activities

Ms. O'Hare reported that the Water Division is going to be doing some maintenance work on its pipes under a IWWC permit. They will be digging down 1-4 feet to do their work. When they are finished they will grade and seed the area. Ms. O'Hare will require them to install silt fence in some areas and hay bales along the stream. There was some question as to whether the Water Division would help deal with the invasive species in the area but Ms. O'Hare indicated that she already discussed that matter with them and they would not be dealing with the invasives. Ms. O'Hare explained to the Commission that the Water Division is looking to clear all of the water easements. She asked them, and they agreed, to pull back the clearing line to just before the ridge. The Commission showed interest in walking the site to see exactly what they would be clearing. Ms. O'Hare indicated that she would get a map out to each Commissioner so they would have it for the walk. This application would be discussed at the March 3rd IWWC meeting.

B. Farmland Lease Properties Program

1. Lease Bid Proposal (Fields 1A, 1C, 7A, 7E, and 7F)

Ms. Saunders presented the "Lease Recommendations for 5 Vacant Fields" and "Recommendations" both prepared by the Farmland Lease Committee; both dated February 11, 2010. She gave a brief summary of both items. Ms. Saunders believes that some language in the lease agreement needs to be revised. There was discussion on the requirement that farmers notify Ms. O'Hare each time they apply chemicals to their fields. It was decided that Mr. Pietras and Ms. Saunders would develop a system where the farmers would periodically submit a formal report to the Environmental Planner. Ms. Saunders and Mr. Pietras would keep in touch informally with the farmers on a regular basis and would complete an annual report on all the lease fields. The goal is to keep relations open between the farmers and the Commission.

Earlier in the meeting, it was decided that Field 7A would not be included in the lease bid proposal at this time so any reference to Field 7A would be taken out of the, draft lease and draft proposal.

MOTION: Mr. Ryan to accept the proposal presented by the Farmland Lease Committee dated February 11, 2010 to bid Fields 1A & 1C and 7E & 7F for zone tilage eliminating Field 7A.

SECOND: Mr. Lathrop

VOTE: Unanimous

2. Field 4A – request

Ms. Saunders reported that Mr. Wall has dropped Field 4A. Ms. O'Hare indicated that she would like to put this field out to lease for the remaining 2 years. The Commission would like to see minor cutting, and feels that no other maintenance would need to be done in that field other than the gate that needs to be repaired. Ms. Saunders stated that the lease document for this Field needs reworking regarding management of the field, etc., and so it should not go out to bid with the others, but later on.

3. Fields 5A, 6B, 6C, 7A, 11A & 11B – Public Works Dept. assistance – status

Ms. O'Hare reported that she spent time with Henry McCully last week and they visited several fields (listed above). Ms. O'Hare reviewed several items that she requested be done by the Public Works Department.

4. Field 11A & B – snowmobile trespass

There was discussion of trespassing in Fields 11A&B. The activity has been reported to the Community Policing Department. Henry McCully will place logs to block the gaps and prevent further trespassing. Ms. Saunders reported that the lock and chain have been cut off the gate and that should be added to the list of items to be repaired.

C. **Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road**

1. Footbridge proposal

Ms. O'Hare reported that the Girl Scout project for the footbridge over the stream in the Fresh Meadow Swamp was administratively approved by the IWWC Chairman. Ms. O'Hare reported that Henry McCully wants some anchor pins installed on the bridge. Mr. Ryan will notify the Girl Scouts that they need to install some type of steel pins or something to anchor the bridge.

There was discussion of a neighbor parking his car along the edge of the field. Ms. Heffernon will compose a letter stating that parking is not allowed in that field and that the activity must stop.

2. Walking Path Concept Plan (phase two) contract – status

No work has been done yet on the contract, which must go out this spring.

Mr. Lathrop discussed some erosion that was occurring on the banks of Lufbery Park due to the use of ATVs and dirt bikes. Mr. Lathrop has taken pictures of the damage. Ms. Heffernon would do some research and report at the next meeting. Ms. O'Hare will ascertain boundary marking status.

D. **Invasive Species Eradication**

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

Nothing new to report.

E. **Ferguson Woods**

1. Tree installation proposal

Ms. Saunders suggested planting some trees in the area of the old Ferguson homestead. She indicated that something needs to be done to prevent people from driving down to the pond. Commission liked the idea of tree installation.

F. **Fireworks Island**

1. Canoe launch grant – status

Ms. O'Hare reported that she received correspondence from Roman Mrozinski, NRCS, regarding the grant for two canoe access ramps at Fireworks Island. The grant was approved and construction must be completed by September 30, 2010.

G. **Volunteer Work Program**

Nothing new to report.

3. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

A. Reports

B. Other

Nothing new to report

4. OPEN SPACE PLAN, 1999 – update

Nothing new to report.

5. OPEN SPACE USER GROUP MEETING, Park & Rec., March 8, 5:30 p.m.

6. BUDGET 2010 – 2011

Ms. O'Hare reported that on March 1st she would be meeting with the Mayor to review the budget. Ms. Heffernon would be attending the meeting with Ms. O'Hare. Some items Commissioners suggested for next year's budget were four (4) entrance signs to Tyler Mill, additional boundary marker signs, some gates that need repair, and seed for the stabilization of Field 7A. The major item (\$6,000) would be the GPS blazing, and trail improvements to the Pink Trail in Tyler Mill Preserve. Ms. Heffernon is to itemize a list of trouble spots on the Pink Trail some of which would include the mapping of the ravine, invasive species, and the stream crossing.

There was some discussion of the Open Space Management Fund and what the balance of that fund is. The Commission also discussed who has access to that account and how the Commission would like to be notified every time there is a withdrawal as several entities can withdraw from the fund. Ms. O'Hare will discuss the matter with the Finance Department as well as Don Roe and report back to the Commission at the next meeting.

Chairman Borne reported to the Commission that Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner was in need of a desk. There was discussion of if it should come out of the Conservation Commission budget.

MOTION: Mr. Lathrop to approve up to \$200. for a desk for Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner to come out of the Conservation Commisison budget.

SECOND: Mr. Pyskaty

VOTE: All Members voted "yes" except for Ms. Heffernon, who voted "no".

7. CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS

1. CT Association of Wetlands Scientists, "Wetlands: Impaired to Pristine", Feb. 23 Mountainridge
2. CT Farm Bureau Assoc., "Farming & Inland Wetlands", So. Windsor, Mar. 4
3. New England Cottontail (rabbit) study

Chairman Borne reported that Travis Goody is doing a study of the New England Cottontail and the Eastern Cottontail and would share his findings with the Conservation Commission when his work is completed.

4. DEP In-stream Flow Regulation presentation, Jan 20 – report

Ms. Saunders, Ms. Heffernon, and Ms. O'Hare attended and agreed the DEP gave an excellent presentation. The Quinnipiac River is proposed to be classified in segments.

5. CFPA – dues

Ms. O'Hare stated that dues would be \$75 for the Conservation Commission.

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon to approve a payment of \$75 to the CFPA for dues.

SECOND: Mr. Lathrop

VOTE: Unanimous

Mr. Pepe and Mr. Matuskiewicz left the meeting at this time.

The Commission went back and discussed the issue of sugaring as presented by Mr. Pepe earlier in the evening. Each Commissioner gave his/her point of view. Some issues that were brought up were the fact that Mr. Pepe was selling the syrup, he must cross the stream causing sedimentation, and he has no insurance that would cover him if anything happened on Town property. The Commission had some concerns that if this were allowed it would be setting a precedent. After further discussion it was decided that Ms. O'Hare would contact Henry McCully and ask that a gate, sign and lock be placed at the site. The Commission scheduled a site walk for Saturday, February 13th at 9:00 a.m. after which they would make a recommendation to John Gawlak.

8. NEXT MEETING: - March 11, 2010

9. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Ms. Heffernon to adjourn.

SECOND: Mr. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonja Vining
Recording Secretary