

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
TOWN OF WALLINGFORD
February 19, 2009**

MINUTES

The Wallingford Conservation Commission held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, February 19, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the Basement Conference Room of the Town Hall Municipal Building, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT. Present were Chairman Jeffrey Borne, Vice Chairperson Mary Heffernon, and Commissioners Carl Arsenault, John Lathrop, Kenneth Ryan, Dianne Saunders, Thomas Pietras, and Scott Trauner. Absent was Commissioner James Pyskaty. The Town staff present were Ms. Erin O'Hare, Environmental and Natural Resources Planner, and Recording Secretary Ms. Kathleen Burns. No one was present from the public. Chairman Borne called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

Chairman Borne welcomed new Commissioners Mr. Tom Pietras and Mr. Scott Trauner. Tom Pietras is a Wallingford native who is a professional soil scientist and has expertise in forestry. Scott Trauner resides in Wallingford and is a teacher. He is a member of the Wallingford Land Trust, and he writes about nature and outdoor recreation.

Ms. O'Hare had given New Commissioner Packets to Tom and Scott. She had circulated an updated list of members and Committee memberships, which were confirmed tonight. Ken Ryan stated that he is also on the Butterfly Conservation Management Committee.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

B. Minutes, Special Meeting, February 9, 2009

These corrections were made:

- On p. 1, middle, to correct "Police" to "Policy".
- On p. 3, paragraph 4, sentence 3, to insert "Conservation Commission's" before "*Open Space Plan, 1999*".
- On p. 3, paragraph 5, sentence 1, to insert "she is" and "which is currently updating". The corrected first sentence will read: "Dianne indicated that she is Chairman of a subcommittee which is currently updating the *Open Space Plan, 1999*."
- On p. 5, paragraph 1, sentence 1, to drop the end of the sentence and to add "but she was unable to attend."
- On p. 5, paragraph 1, sentence 2, to drop "given" and "State" and to add "she gave". This sentence will read: "Erin had forwarded the Commission Linda's two documents of testimony she gave to the Legislature on the issue of sewer funding and map inconsistency."
- On p. 5 after the motion to add: "The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m."

Motion: Mary Heffernon, to accept the February 9, 2009, Special Meeting Minutes as corrected.

Second: Ken Ryan.

Vote: Unanimous. Carl Arsenault abstained as he had not attended the meeting. Both new Commissioners had attended this Special Meeting and they voted on these Minutes.

This Special Meeting concerned Wallingford's Water and Sewer Service Areas and consistency with the State Conservation and Development Policy Plan. Ms. O'Hare reported that today Roger Dann informed her that the Town may have to pursue an interim if plan the State does not act soon to approve the submitted map. He had indicated that after the Special Meeting there were a few changes to the Water and Sewer Service area map that the PUC then approved on February 17th. These changes requested by OPM entailed the addition of the Wharton Brook Park area and Malchiodi Drive in the proposed service area and the removal of two parcels from the northwest corner of the sewer service area. At the March Commission meeting, Ms. O'Hare will show the amended map that she will obtain from Roger Dann.

A. Minutes, Regular Meeting, January 8, 2009

These corrections were made:

- On p. 4, at 2.C.1., sentence 2: to delete "Mr. Shultz" and to insert "Erin O'Hare".
- On p. 5, at 2.G.2., sentence 1, to delete "by the Rod & Gun Club".

Motion: Mary Heffernon, to accept the January 8, 2009, Regular Meeting Minutes as corrected.

Second: Ken Ryan.

Vote: Unanimous. Note: The new Commissioners had not attended this meeting, so they abstained.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Trails System Improvement Program
 - a. DEP Recreational Trails Grant

Ms. O'Hare said the DEP has not yet received the archaeologist's final report but she was told by DEP that the archaeologist recommended some conditions. Ms. O'Hare said the State Historical Preservation Trust will write to the DEP recommending the release of these DEP grant funds. A decision on the Federal trails grant funding should be known by mid-March.

- b. Blazing Contract

Contract language for the northern portion of Tyler Mill is partly done.

- d. Bertini Park – Trail Mapping

Ms. O'Hare prepared the proposed contract today for release to bidders but ran into a mapping issue. She informed the Commission that there is Town-owned land across Woodhouse Avenue, and fronting on it, which touches Bertini Park but is not actually part of the park. She will check that this particular area is Town owned and, if so, she will include it in the Bertini Park trail mapping contract. The Commission approved that it should be included.

Separately, Ms. O'Hare said that the customary boundary markings used by the State of Connecticut have the property marked on both sides to show toward persons who are entering or leaving the property. This topic will be on the March meeting agenda.

- c. Long Island Sound Futures Fund

Dianne Saunders said her Committee is looking into obtaining grants from this entity. The grant application she described in January, which might have been for restoring watershed lands at Tyler Mill, is due by early March, which is too soon. No application will be filed.

A separate grant application could be made for invasive species control in the future and Dianne will keep working on this.

B. Farmland Lease Properties Program

1. Field 14A – 205 Main Street

Chairman Borne received a copy of Corporation Counsel Mantzaris' January 16th reply to property owner Mr. Daniel LeGrand which indicates that if Attorney Mantzaris has not received a response from Mr. LeGrand by January 30th, then the Law Department will prepare paperwork for litigation on the open space encroachment. Also, at the January Commission meeting, Ken Ryan had asked for some information. Attorney Mantzaris has responded that the Town does have the legal description of the property involved and will now obtain an A-2 survey of the encroachment.

2. American Farmland Trust & CCM - Technical Assistance Grant

Ms. O'Hare has not heard yet on this January grant application to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture but will very soon. Dianne Saunders said she will wait to contact NRCS to complete the "prime and important soils mapping" (to be done as a separate effort) - until we hear the outcome of the grant.

3. Field 3A – Land Trust trail

Mary Heffernon said that Field 3A abuts Farnum Field, which is Wallingford Land Trust property. She and other Commissioners had walked the area of the proposed trail with Eagle Scout candidate Jack Casey and WLT members on January 11th. The farmer who leases Field 3A has no objection to the trail's construction, and the Commissioners consented as well. Mary Heffernon wrote that to Jack Casey in a letter dated January 19th. Erin O'Hare already requested the Engineering Department to post the hedgerow but the Commission requested no posting. Jack Casey should be instructed to post two signs showing the transition from Land Trust property to Town property.

Discussion switches to Lufbery Park.

G. Lufbery Park

1. Boundary Marking

It was the Commission's consensus tonight that boundary-marking signs should be posted facing the outside of this Town property as soon as possible, especially for the portion that extends down to South Hartford Turnpike opposite the Wilbur Cross exit ramp. Erin O'Hare will direct the Engineering Department on that. Later, the Commission may decide to post on the inside of the property, as well.

In discussion, some Commissioners were concerned about the deep ruts made in this sloping section of Lufbery Park by ATV activity. John has reported the activity to the Police Department. If the offenders are identified, Chairman Borne suggested that the Town should bill them for the cost to the Public Works Dept. for restoration of the terrain.

4. Lease Bid Proposal

Chairman Borne asked the Farmland Lease Properties Committee to meet to make recommendations for the lease bids.

5. Field 7A – Northford Road – Restoration Project – Soil & Water Conservation Society grant

The Commissioners agreed that a grant application as described by Ms. O'Hare, could be made for restoration of Field 7A. The grant is due June 1st. Dianne Saunders recalled that the NRCS already had GPS-located the wetlands at the back of this field. She asked to have a row of evergreens installed at the west end of the field by the ravine to deter invasive plant encroachment. Also, the Commission had previously agreed to put the front area into hay or zone tillage by any lessee. So far, Public Works only put stone to line the retention basin. Ms. O'Hare indicated that any lease area would need to allow an access for equipment to restore the back of the field.

Dianne reported that farmers need land for corn, so maybe the North Branford Road fields can be leased for 2 years in corn then hay. Corn cultivation would improve the black plastic condition. Ms. O'Hare indicated Nelson Cecarelli was interested in these fields for zone tillage. There is the issue of the watershed which currently prohibits vegetables.

On a separate topic, Chairman Borne stated that new member Tom Pietras is willing to map wetlands on Town-owned open space properties, such as Beseck Meadow bordering Durham. He asked Tom to look at the existing wetlands information on the topographical maps. Tom said March-April is a good time to do wetlands mapping. The Commissioners agreed. Dianne recommended mapping the sedge swamp in Tyler Mill Preserve, down the steep slope from Peach Hill and Celestial Lane, where some plant and animal species ought to be recorded and where there is the potential for future grant opportunities. Chairman Borne asked Tom to assess the Galko property on the south side toward the Watrous property, on the left side of the road by the parking area toward the creek, where the wetlands were mapped. This area may be suitable to install wetland seeds. Commissioners will relay additional suggestions to Ms. O'Hare.

Chairman Borne asked the Committee to report back.

6. Fields 7E & 7F – Northford Road

Bidders for the Mackenzie Reservoir work are saying that they would not need to store dredge spoils on Fields 7E and 7F. The Town Council will be asked to

approve this situation on February 24th. If affirmed, the Commission agreed to lease out these fields for vegetable production.

7. Field 16A – Proposed Skating Area, Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

Dianne Saunders had suggested to Parks and Recreation Director John Gawlak that part of Field 16A, across from the present skating pond, could also be used for ice skating by creating a small area and flooding it. Tonight Ken pointed out that Field 16A is more exposed to sunlight and therefore may not be a good ice skating venue and Mary

indicated it may be sued for a butterfly area in the future. The skating proposal will not be pursued.

8. Fields 11A & 11B – Request for Remote Model Airplane Use

This request was referred to the Commission from Parks and Recreation Director John Gawlak. No time period was specified. These fields off Tamarack Swamp Road are now leased Lyman Hall VoAg. The Commissioners noted that they had denied a similar request before for other property at Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road due to the presence of grassland bird habitat. Dianne Saunders said there are nesting goshawks on Fields 11A and 11B in winter; also, hay growth protects bobolinks there from May to early September. The Commission's consensus was to have Ms. O'Hare reply to Parks and Recreation that these fields are not a good location for this activity for the species/habitat reasons stated above. Members had no other suggestions for a suitable location.

C. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Butterfly Meadow – Seeding

Committee Chairperson Mary Heffernon said the purchased seed needs to be kept cool (between 35 and 40 degrees) and away from moisture and rodents. For now, Ken Ryan will store the seed. Ms. O'Hare will check with Mr. Schultz as to when the Lyman Hall Vo-Ag students can plant it as access to equipment remains an issue.

2. Walking Path Concept Plan (phase two) contract

Ms. O'Hare indicated there was no progress on this contract proposal.

D. Invasive Species Eradication

1. Long-Term Invasive Species Management Program

Dianne Saunders had no report, except to mention the possibility of applying for the Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant next year. (See 2.A.c. above).

2. DEP Beetle Control Program – Tilcon

Vice Chairperson Mary Heffernon prepared a letter to Mr. Terry Wall, requesting Tilcon Connecticut's assistance in controlling the purple loosestrife invasive. Mary will edit it per the comments received tonight, and new member Scott Trauner will assist. The Commissioners recommended sending this letter to Mr. Wall with a colored brochure about this DEP-endorsed program.

E. Keer Property

1. Walk

2. Committee

This item was not taken up.

F. Scard Road

1. Status

This item was not taken up.

Kathy Burns left the meeting at 9:25 p.m. Ms. O'Hare acted as Recording Secretary for the remainder of the meeting.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

D. 2. DEP Beetle Control Program - Tilcon – status

Mary distributed copies of a draft letter she had prepared to Tilcon requesting permission to target the area for loosestrife control. Commissioners agreed on whole with the letter making a few changes in wording. Mary will forward her final draft to Scott for comments and will then forward the letter to Tilcon with a copy of the DEP brochure on the topic enclosed if she can locate one.

Chairman Borne skipped down the Agenda to Item #4, Property Acquisition.

4. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

A. There was no activity to report.

5. OPEN SPACE USERS' GROUP - March 11

Chairman Borne described the purpose of the Open Space Users' Group to the new Commissioners. Ms. O'Hare noted the revised meeting time for the March 6th meeting was 5:00 p.m.

6. OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT MEETING – date t.b.d.

Ms. O'Hare asked the Commission for possible dates for scheduling the meeting. It was agreed she will set the meeting as department head schedules allow. Dianne requested that the matter of invasive plant seeds in fill material to be used by Public Works appear on the agenda.

7. OPEN SPACE PLAN, 1999 – update

Chairman Borne asked Ms. O'Hare to attend the forthcoming Open Space Plan Committee meeting to add input and to forward the new Commissioners copies of the Plan. Dianne will arrange that meeting. She explained the timeliness of the Plan revision project.

Chairman Borne suggested that Tom and Scott review materials sent and then consider joining one or more of the Commission's Standing Committees.

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Ms. O'Hare indicated that a full Commission is required for election of officers. Chairman Borne requested election of officers be placed on the next agenda.

9. BY-LAWS REVISION

Ms. O'Hare indicated the By-laws need to be revised from seven to nine members. She will ask the Law Department the procedure for amending the By-laws as the procedure is not provided for therein.

10. SPEAKER EVENT**A. Adult Continuing Education Class**

Ms. O'Hare showed the class announcement in the Adult Continuing Ed brochure. The brochure does not reference the Conservation Commission. It was intended as a public outreach program. Don Roe and Mary's idea was for one-time workshops. The "All About Wetlands" class was the only class of the Commission's proposed 8-class series that ended up offered by Adult Ed. The Commission then discussed the issues raised by the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission (IWWC) at its last meeting relative to the Environmental Planner using her time in this way. Ms. O'Hare will report back to the Commission on responses from the Law Dept. and Personnel Dept. in regard to the issue of a possible conflict of interest raised by the IWWC. Chairman Borne will write a memo for the file on the request for the class.

"Celebrate Open Space" will be on the March agenda.

11. BUDGET 2009-2010

Discussion on the proposed budget focused on natural resource professional services. Dianne felt an annual bird survey for the Grassland Program was not necessary, but we need to start implementing the previous recommendations. The amount of this line item will be the same as last budget with no increase requested and should be used to map the trail system at Ferguson Woods, blazing the trails not covered in the present budget, development of a trails system brochure, and invasive species removal. The Chairman asked Ms. O'Hare to forward a proposed narrative on the above to all sometime prior to the meeting with the Mayor on the proposed budget, March 6 at 2:45 p.m. The Chairman and Mary will try to attend that meeting.

12. CORRESPONDENCE REPORTS

1. "Invasive Plant Workshop for Government, Town , and Municipal Officials"-
CT Agriculture Experiment Station, New Haven, March 5, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
(Registration by Feb. 27)

The event was announced. Ms. O'Hare urged Commissioners to register soon. Chairman Borne authorized staff's attendance at the half-day event to forward the Commission's long-term invasive plant species eradication program effort. He will follow up with a letter.

2. Friends of Boulder Knoll, "First Annual Winter Celebration", Feb. 28, 2-4 p.m.

This event was announced.

3. CFPA - "Environmental Agenda for State & Federal Priorities" & membership

Ms. O'Hare passed around a copy of the CFPA testimony to the Legislature on February 17 relative to State budget cuts and environmental priorities. She is impressed with the organization and suggested the Commission to approve renewal of the CFPA membership. It was agreed to do so.

4. Commission contact list

Ms. O'Hare asked if there were any revisions to the Commission Contact list forwarded. She will resend the list with the addition of Carl's e-mail and work number.

5. Other

Chairman Borne asked if there were any other reports at this time.

Dianne reported she had met with Ed Cella relative to trail work on Field 3A which he leases and regarding the blocks moved at the entrance to Field 7D which he leases. She proposed installation of an I-beam type gate instead of blocks at Field 7D as it causes a hardship for the farmer to bring equipment across town to replace the blocks after haying. It was agreed to expend monies for a gate to be installed by Public Works Dept. Ms. O'Hare will make the request for authorization.

Chairman Borne indicated that an Annual Report is required by statute. Mary distributed her draft Annual Report to be discussed at the next meeting.

13. NEXT MEETING – is set for March 12, 2009, 7:00 p.m. It was agreed the Conference Room will remain the meeting space for now.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Mary Heffernon

Second: John Lathrop

Vote: Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.