

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
TOWN OF WALLINGFORD  
March 12, 2009**

**MINUTES**

The Wallingford Conservation Commission held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, March 12, 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, Thomas Pietras, James Pyskaty, Kenneth Ryan, Dianne Saunders, and Scott Trauner. Town staff persons present were Ms. Erin O'Hare, Environmental and Natural Resources Planner, Program Planner Mr. Don Roe (arrived as noted), and Recording Secretary Ms. Kathleen Burns. No one was present from the public.

Chairman Borne called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**A. Minutes, February 19, 2009**

These corrections were made:

- On p. 1, paragraph 3, the last sentence should read: "Mary Heffernon stated that Ken Ryan is also on the Butterfly Conservation Management Committee."
- On p. 2, first full paragraph, in the second sentence, to transpose "if plan" to read "plan if".
- On p. 2, at 2.A.1.a. in the second sentence to delete the hyphen in "recom-mending".
- On p. 4, at 2.G.5. re Field 7A, paragraph 3, sixth sentence, to change "Watrous property" to "Rosick property" and to delete the hyphen in "parking".
- On p. 5, at 2.G.7., last sentence, to correct the spelling of "sued" to say "used".
- On p. 5, at 2.G.8., third sentence, to add "to", to read: "These fields off Tamarack Swamp Road are now leased to Lyman Hall VoAg." In the fifth sentence, to change "on" to "near", to read: "Dianne Saunders said there are nesting goshawks near Fields 11A and 11B in winter . . ."
- On p. 6, at 2.D.2. DEP Beetle Control Program – Tilcon – status, to merge this paragraph with the same 2.D.2. above on p. 5.

Motion: Mary Heffernon, to approve the February 19, 2009, Regular Meeting Minutes as corrected.

Second: Ken Ryan.

Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Don Roe joined the meeting at this time.

**B. Approved Minutes, Special Meeting, Feb. 9, 2009 – corrections requested**

Ms. O'Hare asked for further corrections to these Special Meeting Minutes, which were approved on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Some of the requested corrections are made per Mr. Roger Dann of the Water Division:

- On p. 1, in the list to correct "Police" to "Policy".
- On p. 1, last line to change "water main" to "sewer main".

- On p. 2, paragraph 5, second sentence, to strike "Cooke's water main was for irrigation for dairying operation." and to insert in its place: "Cooke's services were for irrigation, the dairying operation, and the house on the homestead lot."

- On p. 3, paragraph 1, in 2.), second sentence, to change "sewers" to "water mains", to read: Fox Run Drive had well trouble, so water mains were put in here."

Motion: John Lathrop, to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of February 9, 2009, as amended tonight per the corrections of Roger Dann.

Second: Mary Heffernon.

Vote: Unanimous.

Chairman Borne initiated discussion about the order of the agenda. Dianne Saunders made some suggestions, and Chairman Borne will consider them.

#### **5. OPEN SPACE USERS' GROUP – March 11**

John Lathrop, Carl Arsenault, Jeff Borne, Mary Heffernon, Dianne Saunders and Erin O'Hare had attended this meeting at the Parks and Recreation Department. Highlights:

Fisher cats, which are similar to a large, aggressive weasel, inhabit Wallingford and other towns. These animals have been introduced into the environment by the State DEP and they are on the State's hunting list.

The Conservation Commission was be asked to give a recommendation about whether to allow bow hunting for deer at Tyler Mill. Don Roe advised that Ms. O'Hare should ask Parks and Recreation Director John Gawlak to, ask the DEP to evaluate the deer population at Tyler Mill, to recommend an appropriate duration for bow hunting, and to determine whether bow hunting would be allowed there. Right now, Tyler Mill is open to small game hunting only. One Commissioner reported seeing poachers at times within Tyler Mill. Mary Heffernon noted that hikers are allowed on the Preserve, also and the use must be compatible.

ATV use at Lufbery Park and elsewhere was discussed. John Lathrop had taken photographs and gave them to the police and to Mr. Gawlak. In the past, the police have brought some ATV trespassers to court, and they have been fined. Don Roe described efforts to increase police powers to impound ATVs as well as certain proposed State legislation, but these have failed in the past. The Commission noted that the police always caution the public and he not to confront trespassers but to report the incident instead. Don Roe said that one solution might be to hire extra enforcement officials for the likely times and locations that trespassers enter. John Gawlak had cited the damage to fields from ATVs and he asked the Users Group members to be vigilant. Tonight, Dianne showed photos of ATV damage by Morris Rock at Tyler Mill in January.

Erin O'Hare showed the proposed DEP Permit Hunting Area Map to the Users Group. She told them that map corrections will be made to add two fields and to subtract out Bertini Park and the soccer fields and the corrected map will be forwarded to DEP to effect.

Tonight, Dianne Saunders said at Tyler Mill she had observed Public Works cutting the whole hedgerow up the hill on Tamarack Swamp Road. Ms. O'Hare suggested that the

unpaved section of Tamarac Swamp Road located with the Preserve boundary may warrant different roadside maintenance treatment. Don Roe will look at this area with Henry McCully.

Also, Dianne said that Jerry Matuskiewicz has put up several more wood duck boxes. Ms. O'Hare will meet with him to get these box sites documented on maps.

## **8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Chairman Borne described the duties of the Chairman.

Motion: John Lathrop, to nominate and elect Jeffrey Borne as Chairman and Mary Heffernon as Vice Chairperson.

Second: Dianne Saunders.

There were no further nominations.

Vote: Unanimous by John Lathrop, Dianne Saunders, Jim Pyskaty, Carl Arsenault, Ken Ryan, Tom Pietras, and Scott Trauner.

Abstained: Jeff Borne and Mary Heffernon.

## **2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

### **A. Tyler Mill Preserve**

1. Trails System Improvement Program
  - a. DEP Recreational Trails Grant – No response yet from the State.

- b. Blazing Contract

Ms. O'Hare has obtained the needed electronic information from Connwood Foresters, Inc.

### **H. Bertini Park**

1. Footbridge Proposal, H. McCully – This is not yet proposed.

2. Trail Mapping – Contract Status

Ms. O'Hare said this contract for Bertini Park was awarded to Connwood Foresters, Inc.

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

1. Butterfly Meadow – Seeding

Erin O'Hare said the dirt is thawing and the drill-seeding machine is available. Will Schultz and the VoAg students will be ready to plant the meadow seed mix by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Ken Ryan is keeping the seed mix for now.

2. Walking Path Concept Plan (Phase Two) Contract

Mr. Anthony Ziembra started this plan last year with The Maguire Group by doing the botanical inventory which is also useful for the mowing plan for this area. Erin O'Hare will prepare the contract for further work on the Walking Path Concept Plan and report back to the Commission.

A new issue tonight: Ms. O'Hare said the Commission has been requested to permit horseback riding at Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road. She said the Commission should place restrictions, if it allows this activity, such as where the horse trails would be, where trailers would be parked, etc. Chairman Borne thought there should be no horse trails established until the walking path is defined. Jim Pyskaty thought there is not enough room for horseback riding. Don Roe said the Walking Path contractor should assess the feasibility of adding this use. It was the Commission's consensus tonight to reject having horse trails or permitting horseback riding here for now because the walking trails are not established. Ms. O'Hare was asked to request further information from John Gawlak on the nature and extent of the requested horseback riding use.

3. Bluebird Houses – Carl Arsenault cleaned out all these birdhouses this winter.

## **11. BUDGET 2009-2010**

### **A. Mayor's Meeting, March 6**

Mary Heffernon, Jeff Borne, and Erin O'Hare attended this meeting. It seems that Mayor Dickinson is endorsing the Commission's proposed budget. Carl Arsenault noted that the amount of \$6,000 is renewed for professional services (Purchased Services – Natural Resources account). The total budget comes to around \$9,000. Chairman Borne said one goal next year should be to publish some trail maps and distribute them. Jim Pyskaty showed a sample map from Sessions Woods.

From the current 2008-2009 budget, Erin O'Hare suggested the Commission buy additional trees before June 30<sup>th</sup> and to suggest where to plant them. Right now, 12 maple trees the Town acquired last fall are going to Lyman Hall High School, and the remaining 16 maples that are in pots must be planted soon. John Lathrop said the red maples will do well on the Galko slope toward the Cuneo property, and Dianne Saunders thought that other species should be mixed in. Chairman Borne suggested buying evergreens to plant as screening by the houses that bound the Fresh Meadow Swamp/Galko property. The Commission will confirm tree choices and locations at the April Regular Meeting.

## **6. OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT MEETING – March 16, 3:30 p.m.**

This interdepartmental meeting will be held in Room 315.

## **2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT (continued):**

### **E. Keer Property**

1. Walk – This open space property is located between Scard Road and George Washington Trail. It is getting overgrown. The Commission set a walk date for Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 a.m. Don Roe will provide Chairman Borne with maps of the Keer Property and Field 19A on Scard Road. The object is to assess these properties for early successional growth.

2. Committee – The Commission will serve as a Committee for now.

### **F. Scard Road**

1. Status – This property, known as Field 19A, may be visited by the Commissioners on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, as well.

**B. Farmland Lease Properties Program**

1. Field 14A – 205 Main Street – Encroachment  
Corporation Counsel Mantzaris has been working on this case.

2. American Farmland Trust & CCM Technical Assistance Grant

Wallingford was turned down for this technical assistance grant. However, the AFT/CCM reply letter to Ms. O'Hare, received February 23<sup>rd</sup>, did offer some in-office discussion time with staff and Commissioners. Dianne Saunders explained that the AFT is a nationwide nonprofit organization with committees in each state. Suggested dates are March 30 or 31 or April 2 or 3. Ms. O'Hare will arrange it. Attending will be Erin O'Hare, Don Roe, Dianne Saunders, and perhaps other Commissioners.

Chairman Borne said the Commission's Farmland Lease Properties Committee could use input from new members Tom Pietras and Scott Trauner. Dianne Saunders described the "Prime and Important Farmland Soils" in the State's Plan of Conservation and Development. Wallingford's prime and important soils are not marked or mapped yet, but Dianne expects some documentation will be forthcoming. Also, Dianne thought the AFT representatives could advise on the use of zone tillage on Farmland Lease fields. She added that the State DEP and the Department of Agriculture are realizing that Farmland Lease fields should have passive recreation as a companion use.

Erin O'Hare pointed out 34 Farmland Lease fields and the 5 Properties Managed for Wildlife Conservation on the Town wide map. Chairman Borne asked that Ms. O'Hare would update this map to include other properties such as Keer property.

Don Roe left the meeting at this time.

3. Lease Bid Proposal – Not discussed.
4. Field 7A – Northford Road – Restoration Project – Soil & Water Conservation Society Grant Application

This will be discussed at the (above) AFT/CCM meeting.

**G. Lufbery Park**

1. Boundary Marking – No report.  
(See above under #5 Open Space Users Group regarding ATV trespass)

**I. Volunteer Work Program**

1. Planning Assignment List – Boy Scouts, etc. – No report.
2. Summer Interns – No report.

3. VoAg Student Projects

There is a request from Lyman Hall High School VoAg students to put their flying squirrel boxes at Farmland Lease fields 11A and 11B on Harrison Road. The Commission had no objection.

**D. Invasive Species Eradication**

1. Long-term Invasive Species Management Program

Dianne Saunders has three helpers for this project. She took photographs of invasives at Tyler Mill. Mary Heffernon noted that the trails are to be kept more than 200 feet away from the foundations there, according to the prospective State grant. Dianne asked if invasive plants can be cleared close to those foundations. Erin O'Hare will get clarification on that.

2. "Invasive Plant Workshop for Government, Town, and Municipal Officials" – CT Agriculture Experiment Station, New Haven, March 5. Dianne Saunders, Ken Ryan, Mary Heffernon and Erin O'Hare attended the workshop, which was excellent. A poster was displayed.

3. DEP Beetle Control Program – Tilcon

Mary Heffernon and Scott Trauner collaborated on the letter asking for Tilcon Connecticut's assistance in this program. The letter has been sent out.

### **3. GRASSLAND BIRD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT / RESTORATION INITIATIVE**

#### **A. Beseck Meadow**

Recently, Tom Pietras looked at this property (the former Bugai property) near Durham. He went up and walked the Mattabassett Trail nearby. He mapped the wetlands on Beseck Meadow and at Asmun Brook, sketched the trail, and located the possible vernal pool just beyond the west end of the property. Chairman Borne read the details on landscape, soils, drainage, wetland areas, vegetation, plants, and invasives. There is evidence of prior disturbance of the wetlands for agriculture. Tom's report will be filed with Erin O'Hare. Further, Tom talked with the Engineering Department, and all this information will be given to Engineering as an overlay to their work. The Department of Public Works last mowed this property about three years ago. Tom Pietras saw a lot of autumn olive and multiflora rose. Later this month, Tom will map the other side of Beseck Meadow by High Hill Road.

### **7. OPEN SPACE PLAN, 1999**

Dianne Saunders and the Committee will be working on this after April 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **9. BY-LAWS REVISION – No discussion.**

### **10. SPEAKER EVENT**

#### **A. Adult & Continuing Education Class, March 25**

This course, "All About Wetlands", will be given by Erin O'Hare. It is open to the public, and advance registration is required.

### **13. CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS:**

1. Friends of Boulder Knoll, "First Annual Winter Celebration", February 28 – Not reported tonight.
2. "CT Land Conservation Conference", Wesleyan University, April 4  
Commissioners who wish to attend may sign up through the office.
3. Wallingford Water & Sewer Service Area Map

Not taken up.

4. Other – “Celebrate Open Space Day”

The 2009 date was set for Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, with a rain date of May 10<sup>th</sup>. Mary Heffernon will invite the Wallingford Land Trust to collaborate on this event. Featured will be the new trail constructed as an Eagle Scout project on the Land Trust’s Farnum Field and Wallingford’s Farmland Lease Field 3A next to it. Scott Trauner suggested, and the Commission agreed, that parking should be at Vietnam Veterans Park and that groups should go up from there to the two fields. Other arrangements will be discussed in April.

## 12. ANNUAL REPORT

Mary Heffernon drafted the 2008 Annual Report to the Town Council. The Commissioners were pleased with this report. Ken Ryan asked to add that some Commissioners had hand-seeded fields 6A and 7A to mitigate erosion there. These fields are vegetated now. Dianne Saunders asked to add that the Conservation Commission had used consultant services for the Phase 2 Study of the Grassland Bird Habitat Enhancement / Restoration Initiative; also, that the Walking Path Concept Plan and the mowing plan for Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road were underway.

Motion: John Lathrop, to accept the 2008 Annual Report to the Town Council with the additions made tonight.

Second: Dianne Saunders.

Vote: Unanimous.

Mary Heffernon will transmit the Annual Report with a cover note to the Town Council. Copies will go to Erin O’Hare, Don Roe, and the Conservation Commission.

## 4. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

### A. Reports

Ms. O’Hare described a request referred to the Commission from Town Council Chairman Michael Brodinsky. A private person would like to acquire a small amount of Town property on the north side of Oak Street in Yalesville. Apparently, it touches the person’s own property at 1163 Old Colony Road, Tracy. In discussion, the Commissioners were unsure whether this matter could be considered, since the Commission has not had a formal request from the Mayor. No additional information was available. John Lathrop stated he believes that the Commission should not be in favor of selling Town property unless there is a good reason for it. The Commission’s unanimous consensus was to endorse John’s statement. Ms. O’Hare will convey this consensus to Mayor Dickinson.

Separately, Tom Pietras described that other towns sometimes purchase land from an owner and then sells off a piece for development retaining the remainder as open space. Chairman Borne said the Commission periodically sends out its own letter on that topic. It was prepared last year by Dianne Saunders and covers a number of options for land owners.

14. **NEXT MEETING** – Is set for Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>.

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion: Mary Hefferon, to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Jim Pyskaty.

Vote: Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns, Recording Secretary