

**Conservation Commission
Town of Wallingford
June 11, 2009**

MINUTES

The Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held on Thursday, June 11, 2009, in the Basement Conference Room of the Town Hall Municipal Building, Wallingford, Connecticut.

Seated from the Commission were Acting Chairperson Mary Heffernon, Carl Arsenault, John Lathrop, Thomas Pietras, James Pyskaty, Kenneth Ryan, Dianne Saunders, and Scott Trauner.

Absent was Jeffrey Borne (Chairman).

Town staff persons present were Ms. Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner and Natural Resources Planner, and Recording Secretary Sonja Vining. One member of the public, George Foulds, was present.

Acting Chairperson Heffernon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. March 12, 2009 – Regular Meeting

Ms. Heffernon noted that on Page 7, item 2 should note that Ms. O'Hare was in attendance.

MOTION: Mr. James Pyskaty to approve the Minutes of the March 12, 2009 with correction noted above.

SECOND: Mr. Trauner

VOTE: Unanimous

B. May 7, 2009 – Special Meeting

No Minutes were presented but they will be considered at the July meeting.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

A. Bertini Park

1. Trails mapping report, presentation – Mike Reigler, Connwood Foresters, Inc.

Mr. Reigler issued to the Commission his Bertini Park Trail Systems Report dated June 8, 2009. He gave a brief summary of his report. He had walked the entire property and reported that Bertini Park is generally in good condition. There is

evidence of ATV activity throughout the Park, which he had marked on his maps along with the areas that he felt were trouble spots. There was quite a lot of dumping of wood and concrete that he found. In the soccer field parking area there was a gutted boat that has been dumped. Mr. Reigler would recommend having the gates close at dusk to prevent this type of activity. He doesn't feel that the signage for the Park is adequate. He didn't see evidence of a lot of tree cutting. He did report that there were some small trees cuts, perhaps for campfires. In his report he classified the trails as major, minor, and intermediate, as requested. He found the trail system hard to follow and feels a kiosk is needed. He pointed out that the sign for the parking area to the Park faces in one direction making it difficult to find. Mr. Reigler recommended that a loop trail system be created as per proposed drawings submitted. They mentioned the possibility of connecting the soccer field area to the trail system which would be a part of the advanced loop. There is a fire pit near the Muddy River that gets regular use. There was some trash and signs of partying at different locations. He recommended that the gates be closed, signs be posted, and there be some regular patrolling of the area to stop this activity. There is a light pole in the parking lot that has old wires hanging and an old brick building that should be addressed. Mr. Reigler stated that there is a beautiful meadow in the southeast corner of the Park that is full of wildlife. He and Dianne Saunders noted tree removal there which should be enforced.

Ms. O'Hare would like to see a few details added to the map. Dayton Hill Road should actually be West Dayton Hill Road. She would like to see the crosswalk in the south part of the playing fields added to the map. Ms. O'Hare presented the original scope of work map of the Study Area which shows that about 60% of the Study Area is Bertini Park. She suggested that a line distinguishing the Bertini Park boundary from the rest of the Study Area be added to the map.

There was some discussion about possible restrictions on use of the site with or outside the Park. Ms. O'Hare feels it would be useful to get some history on the area. She stated that there could be some restrictions on use depending on how the land was bought or acquired.

B. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Ms. O'Hare indicated there was no news to report.

- b. Blazing contract - status

Ms. O'Hare indicated that the contract will be awarded to Ferrucci & Walicki as a result of the lowest bid.

C. Farmland Lease Properties Program

1. Field 14A – 205 Main Street – encroachment

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

2. Field 1A – French Alliance Weekend procession, June 20

Ms. O'Hare reported that the staging area selection has not been confirmed with her office.

3. Field 3A – encroachment

The encroachment on this site was discussed. Ms. O'Hare reported that approximately two years ago, letters were sent to property owners abutting the field and plaques were put up. The letter was never followed up on with subsequent field checks. There was a suggestion from the Commission to send out letters again and be sure that there is some follow up. The Commission thought that a survey could be done along the top edge and have that area marked with a fence or rope or something to make it clear. The Commission is frustrated with the activity on this site. It would like to see some sort of planting remediation to be sure that no invasives move into the area that some property owners cleared without authorization on Town land. The Commission asked Ms. O'Hare to speak with Corporation Counsel to see what could be done. It would also like to see an article put in the Record Journal regarding the encroachment.

D. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Butterfly meadow – M. Heffernon

Mary Heffernon indicated there was nothing new to report. She will investigate site conditions further next week.

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

Ms. O'Hare would discuss it later in the evening.

3. Mowing Plan contract – status

Ms. O'Hare would discuss it later in the evening.

4. Proposed easements & activities, Old Gate Road – Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co.

Ms. O'Hare reported that the IWWC approved the wetlands application at its last meeting June 3. A revised plan planting design is due in approximately one week. Ms. O'Hare discussed the planting and fence plan proposed to shield the launcher/receiver facility. She stated that TGP's request for easements is in front of the Town Council on June 23rd and at this time the Conservation Commission has not been provided a referral with the current easement proposal. Ms. O'Hare reviewed the IWWC map of the proposed easement.

E. Garden Road Property

1. Boat launch proposal – M. Heffernon

Ms. O'Hare reported that there was a meeting in the Mayor's office regarding a grant application to construct a boat launch this week. Several sites have been considered such as Garden Road and Hall Avenue. The most likely site seems to be at Community

Lake with the Mayor indicating a second spot at Fireworks Island would be desirable. Mary Heffernon indicated she would be sure Mary Mushinsky was apprised of the current proposal by NRCS.

F. Invasive Species Eradication

1. Long-term invasive species management program – update, D. Saunders
Ms. Saunders gave an update on her invasive species management program work. She presented a packet of material including a map of the Tyler Mill Preserve where she marked the spots she considers worth addressing. She reported that a lot of the Preserve is clean and nice. But there are some spots that are dismal because of what is happening not just because of the invasive species that are out there. Ms. Saunders pointed out on her map the areas that she is most concerned with. She feels the areas closest to the habitats worth keeping should be dealt with first. There are areas that would be good for volunteers to work and other areas that she feels should be done by professionals. She indicated that in doing this work she has discovered some very interesting and helpful resources. She will put together a list to give to each member of the resources she used. Permission is required to do any work within the watershed, which is where this is. Volunteers should be trained and educated so they can easily spot the worst of the invasive species that would probably be coming into this area. Ms. Saunders would also like to see some public education done. She will be doing a summer study and a fall study of this area. The Commission has a \$1,500 a year commitment to be spent on invasive species control. She recommended that once we are told what can be used in the watershed by the Water Division, we can begin as soon as possible.

G. Volunteer Work Program

1. Planning assignment list (Boy Scouts, etc.)

Mr. Ryan presented to each Member a list of potential volunteer projects. If any Member has any other ideas they can be added to the list. Mr. Ryan suggested that the Commission perhaps prioritize the list into the top five or ten. Dianne Saunders indicated logs block horse trails and log removal can be volunteer task.

2. Summer intern – Nothing to report.

3. VoAg student projects

Ms. O'Hare reported that the Lyman Hall VoAg students put up flying squirrel boxes in Field 11A & 11B.

3. PROPERTY DISPOSITIONS:

The Commission expressed some general concern about the public being notified about property transactions before the Conservation Commission is made aware. The Commission would like to get some explanation as to the process by which the Conservation Commission is notified of Town purchases, etc. Ms. O'Hare will discuss

this matter with Chairman Borne upon his return. The commission felt it should assess property conditions even if the property is proposed to be donated.

Ms. O'Hare discussed very briefly each item below.

- A. **22 Tamarac Swamp Road** – Town Council, June 9 – donation
- B. **1250 Whirlwind Hill Road, Lot 1** – acquisition
- C. **Other**

4. GRASSLAND BIRD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT/RESTORATION INITIATIVE:

Nothing new to report.

5. OPEN SPACE PLAN, 1999 – update, D. Saunders:

Dianne Saunders, Committee Chairperson, indicated she will soon set a date for a Committee meeting.

6. PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS:

A. Celebrate Open Space, May 9 – report

Ms. Heffernon stated that it went well but she was disappointed in the turnout.

B. Speaker Event

Ms. Saunders suggested a “Living Next To Open Space” talk. Items that could be included in the presentation would be such things as borders, invasive species, pesticides and wildlife. The Commission felt that was a good idea but it would be important to include something very interesting to attract people to the event.

7. EXPENDITURES:

A. Proposed expenditures

Ms. O'Hare stated that the fiscal year end is June 30th. She handed out a detailed report of expenditures, dated June 11, 2009, for each Member to review. She went through her report in detail. The Commission reviewed and discussed the report.

MOTION: Mr. Lathrop to accept the budget report as submitted by Ms. O'Hare dated June 11, 2009.

SECOND: Mr. Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous

Ms. O'Hare reported that there was still approximately \$1,370 left in the budget this year under office supplies. She discussed purchasing a color copier for the Commission's use. The copier that she is interested in is approximately \$300. The

balance Ms. O'Hare recommended spending on evergreens to be used on various sites as needed. The Commission discussed Ms. O'Hare's suggestion.

MOTION: Mr. Pyskaty to authorize Ms. O'Hare to spend the balance of the office supply budget on a color copier and evergreens.

SECOND: Mr. Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous

B. Policy for future expenditures

Ms. O'Hare brought up the need to monitor expenditures giving an example of an issue that came up recently. The Commission agreed that any proposed expenditure by a Member must be approved by the Chairman Borne.

8. CORRESPONDENCE/REPORTS:

A. MacKenzie Reservoir dredging project

Ms. O'Hare reported on status of the on-going dredging project. The Commission discussed the issue of the swans in the Reservoir. Ms. O'Hare briefly discussed the issue of forget-me-nots (which are an invasive species) along the banks of the Reservoir which will soon be removed.

B. State Plan of Conservation & Development – interim change request

Ms. O'Hare reported that there is a meeting for Town staff scheduled for June 23 to review changes for the interim period to be submitted to the State.

C. Other

Dianne Saunders requested that the Engineering Dept. be requested to post boundary markers at Tyler Mill Preserve in the New England Drive area.

Tom Pietras showed the Commission recent wetland mapping work he has completed on several Town properties. These maps will be entered into the respective property files for future use.

9. NEXT MEETING: July 9, 2009

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Mr. Pyskaty to adjourn.

SECOND: Mr. Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sonja Vining
Recording Secretary

