

**Conservation Commission
Town of Wallingford
July 8, 2010**

MINUTES

The Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held on Thursday, July 8, 2010, in the Basement Conference Room of the Town Hall Municipal Building, 45 South Main St., Wallingford, Connecticut.

Seated from the Commission were Vice Chairperson, Mary Heffernon, John Lathrop, Thomas Pietras, Kenneth Ryan, Dianne Saunders, and Dianne Lendler. Absent were Jeffrey Borne, Chairman, and James Pyskaty.

Town staff persons present were Ms. Erin O'Hare, Environmental and Natural Resources Planner who acted as recording secretary.

Acting Chairperson Mary Heffernon called the meeting to order at approximately 7:04 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. May 13, 2010 – Regular Meeting

It was determined that the Commission had received the final draft copy of the Minutes, however an earlier draft had been inadvertently posted on the Town website and distributed to Town departments and others who regularly receive copies of the Minutes. Ms. O'Hare will address the matter.

Changes to the (final draft) Minutes were as follows:

- Item 2.A.2., "Trials" Committee to "Trails Committee."
- Item 2.A.3., "fragmites" to "Phragmites"
- Item 2.B.2., add "Field 18A and Field 6C" to the list of fields.
- Items 2.B.3., "were a car" to "where a car".

MOTION: Mr. Lathrop to approve the Minutes of the May 13 Regular Meeting as corrected.

SECOND: Mr. Ken Ryan

VOTE: Unanimous.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Ravine Restoration (west of Field 7A) - status

Mr. Pietras reported that there has been no movement since the last meeting.

2. DEP Recreational Grant work - status

Acting Chairperson Heffernon reported that the Trails Committee had completed its review of trail conditions and the next step is for Don Roe and Ms. O'Hare to prepare contracts.

3. Entranceway - invasive plant eradication

Ms. O'Hare reported briefly on contract progress. Although the contractor, All Habitat Services, has received payment, satisfactory completion of the work involving inspections and spraying as needed is anticipated to continue into the fall.

4. Sport gun policy

Ms. O'Hare read a copy of a letter the Recreation Commission had forwarded to the Town Council Ordinance Committee requesting an ordinance relative to both sport gun use and motorized vehicle use policies on Town-owned land. Acting Chairperson Heffernon will speak with Mr. Cervoni, Recreation Commission, soon in this regard.

B. Farmland Lease Properties Program

1. Field 4A & 19A

(Taken up below)

2. Lessee suggestions re: Fields 1A, 1C, 5A, 7E & 7F - W. Dellacamera

(Taken up below. It was noted that Mr. Dellacamera was not present.)

3. Field 2A

(Taken up below)

4. Field 3A - tree planting

Ms. O'Hare inquired if the western border of Field 3A where the tree trespass occurred last year would be a good location to install pines and cedars that are being held for fall planting. It was agreed it was.

5. Farmland Lease Program Committee - report, Dianne Saunders

Ms. Saunders reported the Farmland Lease Program Committee intends to meet often to accomplish its objectives and to distribute Committee Minutes ahead of Commission meetings so as to not take up too much of the meeting time. Minutes of the Committee's Special Meeting held June 16 had been previously circulated.

e. Monitoring

Ms. Saunders described the lease field monitoring program recommended by the Committee and distributed a copy of the Monitoring Report form which had been reviewed by the Environmental Planner previously. Each Committee member intends to meet with respective assigned lessees twice a year and to "drive by" the fields weekly or so. Each member monitors all the fields rented by two respective lessees. Most of the leases come up for re-bid in 2011 so the Committee has begun groundwork to prepare

for out-of-town interest, refining bid and lease language, and improving the field maps. Ms. O'Hare provided copies of the current signed lease documents to the Committee for its work, as requested, and noted that the field maps have undergone revision subsequent to lease signing in some cases.

c. "CT Grown" signage

Ms. Saunders is researching the cost of "CT Grown" signage for the fields in lieu of the State's brown directional "CT Grown" signage. Smaller, green signage is preferable. It will be the same material as the new hunting signage. The signs are proposed for those fields with road frontage.

B.1. Field 4A & 19A

Ms. Saunders reviewed her memorandum, to the file dated July 8 relative to the status of the lease for Fields 4A & 19A which staff had requested as Ms. Saunders was working directly with the lessee, Triangle A Ranch. The lessee has just mowed the fields and will start fence repair this week to get fields in shape by July 15 and ready for cows by August. Ms. O'Hare explained there had been a delay on the lessee's part to begin work but the matter appears to have been resolved.

B.2. Lessee suggestions re: Fields 1A, 1C, 5A, 7E, and 7F - W.
DellaCamera

Ms. Saunders indicated Mr. Dellacamera was not coming and she would review several issues Cecarelli Farms has presented to her recently relative to the five fields they leased. She discussed her memorandum to Ms. O'Hare, dated July 8, which Ms. O'Hare indicated she had not received. Ms. Saunders indicated the fax had been sent after the close of business. She indicated the Committee members had singly conducted a site investigation of Fields 1A, 1B, and 1C to observe field conditions particularly relative to weed growth on Field 1B which Cecarelli Farms proposes to mow "at the end of August" and treat with broadleaf herbicides over the 7-year term of the lease in order to control weed colonization of the cultivated portions of Fields 1A and 1C - planted in sweet corn and squash respectively. They would also like to remove the hedgerow. Ms. Saunders had reviewed the Lessee's request with the Mayor, Henry McCully, Roger Dann, and Adam Mantzaris, Corporation Counsel, and had ascertained that the lease for Fields 1A and 1C would have to be amended to incorporate any lessee work activities on Field 1B. The Water Division approved the proposed herbicide. Ms. O'Hare pointed out that Field 1B was taken out of the Farmland Lease Program and put into the Properties Managed for Conservation Program a few years ago. All agreed that the proposed mowing would relieve Public Works Dept. of a portion of its mowing work. Ms. Saunders indicated the proposed work would be completed by the farmer and the lease rent would remain the same and no bid was required. She presented her map of Field 1B with the proposed activity area highlighted. She indicated the worst offender was the goldenrod which - due to no regular mowing by the Town - has become entrenched. Its roots spread out sideways invading nearby areas. It would be mowed and treated. Ms. O'Hare pointed out that the lower portion of 1B is predominantly

grasses. Ms. Saunders indicated the entire area of 1B would be treated with broadleaf herbicide but the grasses would be unaffected. She would stake out the overgrown sediment basin for mowing.

Ms. Saunders indicated the Committee advocates a similar proposal for the other Cecarelli Farms fields, 5A, 7E, and 7F, where hedgerows are growing in and wetlands areas are growing in which provide seed sources which present a continual problem to the farmer on the cultivated portions of the properties. Ms. O'Hare pointed out that the wetlands on these three fields were deliberately removed from the lease areas a few years ago and it was not clear why herbicides should be applied to wetlands as wetland plants would not colonize dry soils. Ms. Saunders indicated goldenrod was growing in the wetlands on 5A and presented a real problem. The wetlands are proposed to be mowed and herbicided over the term of the respective leases. Mr. Pietras felt the Committee should revisit its recommendation regarding Fields 5A, 7E & 7F.

MOTION: Ken Ryan to amend the lease for Fields 1A and 1C to include 1B with the restrictions as stated in Items 1.a through 1.g of Dianne Saunders' memorandum, dated July 8, 2010, with attached map.

SECOND: John Lathrop

Ms. O'Hare expressed her reservations about the Commission taking action to approve a proposal that staff has not had an opportunity to review and which poses several questions, for instance, the leases on 1A and 1C require a 20-foot buffer to be kept along the road and now the lessee wishes to mow this buffer and apply herbicides to it which will result in a grass-only buffer. Acting Chairperson Heffernon commented that all members should respect the Law Dept.'s recent request that requests from the Commission are to be funneled through the staff and Ms. Saunders had not followed this procedure. The leases on Field 1A and 1C require "eradication of invasive species located in the buffer subject to the approval of the Environmental Planner". Ms. O'Hare pointed out that lessees routinely keep the hedgerows "at bay" as part of their lease and that only a portion of the plants proposed to be eradicated by Cecarelli Farms are, in fact, invasive species. Ms. Heffernon objected to the word "mow" proposed for the hedgerows and buffers. Ms. O'Hare indicated the dimensions of the buffers currently required should be depicted on the respective lease maps moving forward.

VOTE: Unanimous

3. Field 2A (also B.5.a.)

Ms. O'Hare noted that the issue actually pertains to Field "2C", not the "2A" that was referenced in the Engineering Dept. letter relative to a proposed storm flow discharge to the hayfield to alleviate storm flow puddling in North Branford Road. Ms. Saunders reported on the site investigation conducted with Ms. O'Hare to observe site conditions. She feels the water problem is a result of runoff from the recently constructed steep driveway on 132 North Branford Road. Due to Don Roe's memorandum relative to DEP

restrictions prohibiting “structures” on open space properties acquired with state assistance, Mr. Baltramaitis is relocating the discharge to the Right Of Way instead of the hayfield. The Commission indicated if there remains an impact to Field 2C, then it would like to review the proposal once more. Ms. Lendler felt the homeowner should take some responsibility in this safety issue.

4. Field 3A - tree planting

The Commission agreed to install trees along the western border of Field 3A in the location of tree trespass at Ms. O’Hare’s suggestion.

5. Farmland Lease Properties Program

d. Field 7A

Ms. Saunders reported that the Farmland Lease Committee has not finalized a proposal for Field 7A but it will recommend incorporating the Southwest Conservation District’s 2008 plan.

C. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Concept Walking Path Plan

Ms. O’Hare briefly reviewed the (Draft) Concept Walking Path plan and map as submitted by consultant, Baystate Environmental, on June 30 and further comments from the consultant, Anthony Zembe, who could not attend tonight but will be present at the August 12 meeting. Acting Chairperson Heffernon said the plan should consider the possibility of a community garden use. Mr. Pietras indicated the Farmland Lease Committee discussed use of the area for a community garden with John Gawlak. Water service was an issue. Ken Ryan suggested that the proposed trails could link with Land Trust property, the existing path along the Ice Pond’s northerly bank is wet, the plan should incorporate Tessa Arsenaults new trail, and a meandering trail is more appropriate for the Butterfly Meadow. Acting Chairperson Heffernon feels a trail maintenance program should be set before the Town makes additional trails which will require maintenance. Ms. Saunders recalled that the walking plan proposal was in response to the need for more recreational opportunities on the west side of Town. Although Public Works cannot be asked to mow more than once a year, Ms. O’Hare suggested one loop trail could be mowed by the Town or by a contractor as needed seasonally. She will have Baystate cost it out. She will forward copies of report to Commission and Baystate has agreed to revise to incorporate comments into final report after presentation.

2. Butterfly Meadow

Acting Chairperson Heffernon showed photos of butterfly meadow’s new growth resulting from seeding work.

3. Mowing

Acting Chairperson Heffernon indicated Henry McCully, Director, Public Works, asked her for a mowing plan for open space properties. She asked Ms. O'Hare to forward Henry and herself a copy of the mowing schedule previously forwarded along with a townwide map. She will convene a group to review mowing issues next week. Later on, the Commission will complete individual mowing plans for the respective properties.

D. Bertini Park

1. Trail System Improvement - blazing

Acting Chairperson Heffernon reported the Trails Committee has reviewed the blazing work and it is satisfactory.

2. Ropes Program

Acting Chairperson Heffernon indicated she spoke with John Gawlak who assured her equipment (e.g. ropes) will not be left up after use.

E. Ferguson Woods

1. Trail System improvement - blazing

Acting Chairperson Heffernon indicated the blazing work has been reviewed and is satisfactory. She indicated the remaining dirt stockpiled in the vicinity of the former homestead is not acceptable and should be removed.

F. Lufbury Park

1. Frisbee Course - status

Acting Chairman Heffernon indicated the course is being installed.

G. Fireworks Island/Quinnipiac River and Community Lake Park

1. Canoe/Kayak river access trails

Ms. O'Hare reported that the river access trails did not receive IWWC approval and she discussed the design issues involved.

H. Invasive Species Eradication

1. Long-term invasive species management

Ms. O'Hare asked the Commission to consider which area to target with the annual budgeted eradication work in FY10-11. Ms. Saunders suggested the bus turnaround on Tamarac Swamp Road needs treatment. Signs need to be re-posted and dumping is a growing issue there as well.

Ms. Saunders showed photos of Town of Wallingford Open Space sign on North Branford Road which is peeling.

I. Volunteer Work Program

Ken Ryan indicated there was nothing to report. Ms. O'Hare indicated volunteers could be requested to trim back the trail openings in northern area of Tyler Mill Preserve by fields.

3. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

A. DEP grant

Ms. O'Hare reviewed the DEP notice regarding Long Island Sound grant available which could be used for acquisition of open space if the area drained to Long Island Sound which the whole town does. She will ask Don Roe about it.

4. COMMITTEES/FOI Requirements

Ms. O'Hare indicated Don Roe will be addressing this matter. Ms. Saunders indicated the Commission should be forwarded copies of a State brochure on FOI she had obtained from Program Planning.

5. OPEN SPACE PLAN - 1999 Update

Ms. Saunders indicated there was nothing new to report as she has been working on other topics. She was hoping that Ms. Lendler may wish to join this Committee.

6. PUBLIC OUTREACH

1. Full program/speaker

Acting Chairperson Heffernon asked for suggestions for a Fall program. She indicated the Commission is participating in Family Day on September 19 at Doolittle Park.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Purple loosestrife project - Tilcon

Acting Chairperson Heffernon and John Lathrop reported that their loosestrife beetles are being raised on plants obtained from the Tilcon site in pots now located at the community garden with netted enclosures. Ms. Heffernon will relocate them soon.

2. CFPA Annual Meeting - Dr. D. Foster - "2010 Wildland & Woodland Vision For the New England Forest" Ms. O'Hare and Ms. Lendler reported on the event and highlights. Acting Chairman Heffernon attended as well. Copies of the document presented will be in the Commission Library.

3. Other

Ken Ryan will circulate CFPA's online petition asking state Legislature to broaden liability statute in response to a recent court decision on an incident that occurred on MDC lands.

Ms. Saunders reminded all of the CT Botanical Society site investigation to complete a plant inventory of the large swamp in Tyler Mill Preserve on September 5. Acting Chairperson Heffernon will prepare directions and a map for Ms. Saunders to forward to Penni Sharp, CTBS. Ms. Saunders plans to show CTBS photos of plants she had taken there earlier in the season.

MOTION: John Lathrop to adjourn.

SECOND: Tom Pietras

VOTE: Unanimous

Acting Chairperson Heffernon adjourned the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner,
Acting Recording Secretary