

1 **APPROVED MINUTES**

2 **WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

3 **REGULAR MEETING**

4 **Thursday, May 10, 2018**

5 **Basement Conference Room – Town Hall**

6 **45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT**

7 **MINUTES**

8
9 **PRESENT:** Chair Mary Heffernon; Vice-Chair John Lathrop; Commissioners Carl Arsenault; Tom Pietras; Mark Ceneri;
10 Mark Miller; Dianne Saunders; Dianne Lendler; Jeff Borne; Erin O’Hare, Environmental Planner; Cynthia Kleist,
11 Recording Secretary.

12 **PUBLIC:** David Bedell; Jeff Kohan; Jessica Wysocki.

13 Chair Heffernon called the Meeting to order at 7: 00 p.m.

14 **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

15 **A. Minutes, Regular Meeting, April 12, 2018**

16 On page 3, line 28, the hazard was removed by Public Works; line 32, should be “Michael” Klemens; page 5, line 8,
17 should read “eliminate graffiti” put in period after graffiti; page 7, should note it was Tom Grace who took the
18 chainsaw training.

19 **MOTION: Vice-Chair Lathrop made a motion to approve the April 12, 2018 Conservation Commission Meeting**
20 **Minutes as amended. Commissioner Ceneri seconded the motion.**

21 **Vote: Unanimous**

22 Chair Heffernon took the agenda in the following order:

23 **4. SANDPLAINS**

24 Commissioner Borne brought up the Sandplains hearing to be discussed at the May 14, 2018 Planning & Zoning
25 Commission meeting, and the Conservation Commission’s response. Commissioner Borne said he made a request to
26 the involved parties to have the person who did the plant study and the person who did the insect study to attend
27 the PZC meeting. Chair Heffernon distributed the plant study. Commissioner Borne said Town Planner Kacie Hand,
28 informed him the biologist would be attending the PZC meeting, but the archeologist would be unable to attend.
29 Commissioner Borne said Ms. Hand said she believed the archeologist would prepare a written report and the
30 biologist might report on his proposed mitigation plan at the PZC meeting. Regarding the plant survey, Chair
31 Heffernon said she believed not much of anything rare was found but it was not because the habitat was unsuitable.
32 She noted the biologist reported two or three species of insects of concern were found and were classified as
33 threatened.

34 Ms. O’Hare said the archeological study was being completed. As far as the plant study, the conclusion was there
35 were no rare plants listed by the State found on the Sandplains, but this wasn’t because of an unsuitable habitat.

1 Commissioner Saunders noted that some of the Sandplain area had been gone through with equipment. Ms. O’Hare
2 noted the area was tested for septic. Chair Heffernon asked if this was the last piece of sand barren. She also asked
3 about the sandplains area Wharton Brook State Park. Commissioner Borne noted that parts of Wharton Brook State
4 Park and the Sandplains are forested with pitch pine and scrub oak. Ms. O’Hare added that there is no open sand
5 area (sandbarren) at Wharton Brook Park. She said State Rep. Mary Mushinsky contacted a State Archeologist who
6 will attend the PZC meeting.

7 Ms. O’Hare said she made a radius map of the fugitive dust. She showed samples of the sand she collected from the
8 nearby cemetery. Ms. O’Hare showed an enlarged photo map of the Sandplain area on Toelles Road taken in 1965.
9 Commissioner Borne pointed out that years ago, the State identified the area as having two critical habitats.
10 Commissioner Arsenault said he had read the State was interested in purchasing the Sandplains but because Cytec
11 owned that property, they pursued other endangered areas. Ms. O’Hare noted that in the Town of Groton, DEEP
12 purchased 170 acres which included 40 acres of pitch pines for \$700,000 which came out to \$4,100 an acre. She
13 noted the Sandplains in Wallingford cost \$150,000 an acre, noting the difference was that this land is industrially
14 zoned and the Groton land was residentially zoned. Commissioner Borne noted that 15 acres of Sandplains was
15 saved in North Haven in 1976 and said that the Town eventually bought the land.

16 Ms. O’Hare said that State Rep. Mary Mushinsky took the 26 acre-site and superimposed it onto the critical habitat
17 site. She said she had the Engineering Dept. superimpose the Moorhead Study area on the map which she passed
18 around. David Bedell, member of the public, pointed out there is a rare beetle habitat at the Sandplains and
19 wondered if this habitat is lost, if these insects could be introduced into another habitat. Ms. O’Hare said Allnex is
20 still keeping some sand barren area. Ms. O’Hare read from her comments submitted May 11 to the Planning Dept.,
21 regarding environmental concerns and suggestions. She wondered if the Commission wanted to endorse the report.
22 The Commission concurred with Ms. O’Hare’s report.

23 **MOTION: A motion by Commissioner Borne second by Commissioner Miller to support the comments by Ms.**
24 **O’Hare, Environmental Planner, to be made at the upcoming Planning & Zoning Commission regarding the**
25 **Sandplains.**

26 **Vote: Heffernon –yes; Lathrop–yes; Saunders –yes; Lathrop –yes; Borne–yes; Miller –yes; Ceneri – yes; Arsenault–**
27 **yes; Pietras – no.**

28 Commissioner Pietras explained that he cast the lone “NO” vote on Ms. O’Hare’s comment on the biodiversity loss,
29 because he believes the Sandplains don’t have much value as assessed. He said this area is a relic surrounded by a
30 disturbed landscape and will never return to what it was, and is not worth being saved, as the Sandplains are an
31 altered environment.

32 **2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

33 **A. Property Monitoring Reports**

34 Commissioner Lendler reported on Field 4C on Whirlwind Hill Rd., noting this property hasn’t been mowed in several
35 years. She said she walked the property off the access area on Whirlwind Hill Rd., and said the area was scrubby
36 with a lot of multi-flora rose. She said there was no dumping and no refuse. She suggested a letter be drafted urging

1 the mowing of this area. Commissioner Saunders noted the autumn olive is reaching out to Whirlwind Hill Road.
2 Commissioner Lendler said she cleared branches from the access area. She said the property at 1254 Whirlwind Hill
3 Road has been taken care of by Rick Termini and has been maintaining the trail around the property. She reported
4 the storm threw debris around the property. She said Mr. Termini asked if he could lay down gravel at the beginning
5 of the access road, so he can plow in the winter and during the muddy season. Ms. O'Hare indicated the neighbor
6 should not mow the town land and should not deposit gravel on it for his use.

7 Ms. O'Hare pointed out a decision should be made about mowing this area or it will eventually go to forest.
8 *Commissioner Saunders said she and Commissioner Lendler will do a site visit.*

9 Commissioner Pietras reported on 205 Main Street, Yalesville. He said the Town purchased this property 25 years
10 ago with State funding. He said the property is bounded by Main Street on the east and the Ridgefield Apartments
11 to the west and consists of 15-20 acres with 5 acres are a grassed hayfield, (Field 14A) which is leased. Commissioner
12 Pietras noted most of the area is wooded with deciduous forest with intermittent streams that drain through this
13 land. He said there is a large one-acre pond on the southern end of the property. Commissioner Pietras said the area
14 isn't managed outside of the farm field close to Main Street and is just woodlands. He said there are no trails behind
15 the apartment complex. Commissioner Pietras said this is a wildlife area but is not really used by people. He said the
16 Town has the area tagged and is well marked. He said he saw no violations, noting that a resident had removed the
17 playscape on Main Street. Commissioner Pietras said the soil is a sandy outwash and is subject to flooding. He
18 visited the site one month ago.

19 Ms. O'Hare said she reported last month on Doolittle Park. She said there was a log jam in the river and asked Public
20 Works to remove it which they did. She said erosion continues with the calving in from the sides. Commissioner
21 Saunders said she saw the area was flooded all the way up into the field up to the parking lot from the April storm.

22 Chair Heffernon reported on Ferguson Woods. She noted there were some trees down and discussed this with
23 Commissioner Arsenault. She said several trees had fallen onto the trail making it difficult for people to climb over.
24 She said the Red Trail could use reblazing, noting the other trees are good until next year. She pointed out the
25 trailhead sign is missing its decal. She said she spoke to Parks & Recreation about this. Chair Heffernon said the
26 knotweed came back at the entryway and there were piles of wood still sitting around. She said the stream was
27 flowing strongly. Chair Heffernon said the trail that the Commission did last summer looks good.

28 Ms. O'Hare reported on the discoloration in the pond at Ferguson Woods which she and Commissioner Pietras
29 checked out. It turned out a sediment berm had failed on the on the Tilcon Property.

30 **B. Tyler Mill Preserve**

31 1. Kiosk and replacement signage

32 Commissioner Saunders said the kiosk revision work had has not yet been done by the Contractor.

33 2. Stewards of Tyler Mill – report, D. Saunders & D. Lendler

1 Commissioner Saunders distributed her report. She noted in April there was invasive plant work done and many new
2 dogs off leash mostly on the weekends. *Commissioner Saunders will send the photos of the license plates of the*
3 *offenders to Chair Heffernon.*

4 Commissioner Saunders spoke about trail clearing, noting that after several more work parties in April, only two side
5 trails (short bike trails) need minor work to finish clearing the winter's storm damage. She noted the chainsaw
6 training took place as planned and that one potential Steward will be taking the training on their own in June.
7 Commissioner Saunders said the Ag Science student projects have resumed for the Spring. She said the students
8 worked on the bridge planting area and are returning in May. She noted the fishing season opened on April 14 and
9 has been quiet so far.

10 Commissioner Saunders reported on the New Haven "Hash House Harriers" event in April stating there was no
11 permit, no notice and stated that many trails were blazed with spray chalk and blazed off trail in sensitive habitat.
12 She said one trail was blazed with toilet paper. Commissioner Saunders reported on the theft of wildflowers,
13 dumping and vehicle trespass. She reported that a boundary marker is needed for 45 and 48 Tamarac Swamp Road
14 on the northern end of the property and eastern boundary of 48 Tamarac Swamp Rd. She noted the Stewards are
15 working on the early successional habitat restoration there (apple trees) and cannot determine the boundary. *Ms.*
16 *O'Hare will follow-up with the Engineering Dept.*

17 Chair Heffernon noted that at the meeting she had reported on, damage to the Orange Trail in Tyler Mill Preserve,
18 was done by horses and bikes. Chair Heffernon suggested a letter be sent to the Parks & Recreation Commission
19 requesting the trail be for hikers only.

20 **Motion: A motion by Commissioner Borne second by Commissioner Lendler that the Commission recommends**
21 **the Orange Trail be restricted to foot traffic only because of damage to the ridge and sensitive flora and for the**
22 **safety and protection of the sensitive habitat on the ridge tops.**

23 **Vote: Unanimous**

24 Chair Heffernon said the Open Space Users Group will draft language for this sign. *Commissioners Saunders and*
25 *Lendler will work on a sign.*

- 26 3. Tyler Mill Preserve Management Planning Committee – not discussed
27 4. Lone Wolf Tree on Interpretive Trail – report, D. Saunders

28 Commissioner Saunders said Jim Dean, forester, with White Oak Tree Service, contacted her and stated he would
29 like to see the tree when it is leafed out to confirm its species. She said he will try to observe the tree the end of
30 May/ first week of June.

31 **C. Fresh Meadows**

- 32 1. CT Recreational Trails Program Project
33 a. Completion status

1 Ms. O'Hare said the Cheshire Trail is fine, but she noted that a wheelchair would not be able to get back up from the
2 pond because of the steep slope. She said the Contractor needs to redo this trail. She said she hopes the Engineering
3 Dept. will get this corrected before June 2.

4 d. Glacial erratic signage

5 Ms. O'Hare said she, Chair Heffernon and Commissioner Saunders met with the State Geologist and his colleague at
6 the erratic boulder.. *Ms. O'Hare will email the Commission with the five-page final draft report for Commission*
7 *comments.*

8 c.Promotion for CT Trails Day & Celebration event, June 2, 10 a.m. (rain date June 3)

9 Chair Heffernon showed the CT Trails Day brochures the CT Forest & Parks Association (CFPA) stickers. She said she
10 posted flyers at the Parks & Recreation building, the Library, the Senior Center and at Town Hall. She said the
11 information is also posted on the Wallingford Government Television and WPAA, the Record-Journal newspaper did
12 an article; the schools sent the information out by email and noted Gaylord and the Masonic Home made people
13 aware of the Trails Day. She noted a cartoon in the paper and noted State Rep. and Wallingford Town Councilor
14 Craig Fishbein prepared his own flyer on the event.

15 Chair Heffernon spoke about people complaining about ticks in the Fresh Meadow area. The Commission agreed on
16 not spraying the area for ticks. Chair Heffernon said she also received an email from a teacher from Cooke Hill
17 School regarding the need for a toilet. Commissioner Saunders reported the Girl Scout bridge will be repaired and
18 said she will also try to clean up graffiti.

19 b. Rules & Regulations Sign

20 *Chair Heffernon will speak to John Gawlak, Parks & Recreation Director about the sign replacement.*

21 Ms. O'Hare said she could get a mock-up sign made up. The Commission said there should be mowing six feet
22 around the trails from the plot to the pond before June 2. *Ms. O'Hare will look into this.*

23 Chair Heffernon spoke about the correspondence sent to her regarding growing sunflowers in the Butterfly
24 Meadow. Chair Heffernon asked the Commission what they could do if the Commission received plants from the
25 Garden Club. She suggested getting the Vo-Ag students to help.

26 **D. Beseck Meadow – bamboo**

27 Ms. O'Hare said she sent a fax to Henry McCully, Public Works Director, after the last Commission meeting but has
28 received no response. *Ms. O'Hare will contact Mr. McCully regarding the bamboo at Beseck Meadow.*

29 **E. Beseck Mountain – footbridge issue**

30 Ms. O'Hare said she would speak to Rob Baltramaitis, Town Engineer, regarding surveying the area of the
31 footbridge. Commissioner Miller spoke about a drinking party that took place in this area. He reported the fire was
32 not addressed by the Wallingford Fire Dept. but possibly by the Middlefield Fire Dept.

1 **F. Other properties**

2 Commissioner Saunders spoke about a waste oil spill which occurred on the road near Pistapaug Reservoir. She
3 noted that three containers, a five-gallon bucket and some old gas weed whackers were dumped in this area. She
4 said she contacted DEEP and the Wallingford Water Division worked together on this. She said DEEP agreed to work
5 on this right away and sent an on-call company to clean up the area. She said the Water Division put speedy-dry on
6 the road and did not disturb the habitat. Commissioner Saunders said that altogether, eight gallons of oil spilled on
7 the road. She said a caution tape was put around the area. Ms. O'Hare went over the DEEP report. It was also
8 reported the Water Division mowed the entrance to the Tyler Mill Preserve. The Commission expressed their
9 appreciation.

10 **3. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM**

11 **A. Field 18A, 995C East Center St./Tamarac Swamp Rd. – proposed Request For Qualifications**

12 **B. Mowing of the three areas**

13 Commissioner Saunders said nothing was mowed.

14 **B. Farmland Committee**

15 Commissioner Pietras said the fence on the Warren William's property is in disrepair. Commissioner Saunders noted
16 the fence is falling apart. She said the Town installed the barbed wire fence on metal stakes several years ago. She
17 said it separates Warren's 25 acres from the Town's property boundary. Commissioner Pietras said the fence should
18 be replaced. *Ms. O'Hare will speak with Farmer Colleen Auger regarding this property.*

19 **5.OPEN SPACE USER'S GROUP**

20 Ms. O'Hare said Commissioner Saunders did a beautiful Power Point presentation of the Tyler Mill Preserve. Chair
21 Heffernon reported poor attendance.

22 **6.PROPOSED BUDGET**

23 Ms. O'Hare said she has not gotten the final budget back. Chair Heffernon noted the Town Council reverted back to
24 the Mayor's original budget.

25 **7. OTHER TOPICS**

26 Chair Heffernon noted that Saturday is the "Great Parks Pursuit" kickoff which will take place at Wharton Brook
27 State Park. Commissioner Miller will attend this event along with Chair Heffernon.

28 **8. REPORTS & COMMUNICATIONS**

29 **A. Community Lake – Parks & Recreation Dept. – IWWC permit, report**

1 Ms. O’Hare said the IWWC approved this application at their recent meeting. She noted the Parks & Recreation
2 Commission will cut vegetation down to the water’s edge which went against her recommendation to retain a 20 ft.
3 shoreline buffer.

4 **B.CACIWC newsletter, *The Habitat* – Winter/Spring 2018**

5 **C. Game of Logging chainsaw training** - not discussed

6 **D. Rockfall Foundation, May newsletter** – distributed by Ms. O’Hare

7 **E. Rockfall Foundation event**, - “Sustainable Seaford Soiree,” Westbrook, May 24, 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

8 **F. CT Farmland Trust**, donation appeal –mentioned by Ms. O’Hare

9 **ADJOURNMENT**

10 Vice-Chair Lathrop made a motion to adjourn the Meeting at 9:26 p.m. Commissioner Ceneri seconded the motion
11 which passed unanimously.

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13 Respectfully submitted,

14 Cynthia A. Kleist

15 Recording Secretary

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