

**Conservation Commission
Town of Wallingford
August 13, 2009**

MINUTES

The Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held on Thursday, August 13, 2009, in the Basement Conference Room of the Town Hall Municipal Building, Wallingford, Connecticut.

Seated from the Commission were Chairman Jeffrey Borne, Carl Arsenault, John Lathrop, Thomas Pietras, Kenneth Ryan, Dianne Saunders, and Scott Trauner.

Absent was Mary Heffernon, and James Pyskaty.

Town staff persons present were Ms. Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner and Natural Resources Planner, Don Roe, Program Planner and Recording Secretary Sonja Vining.

Chairman Borne called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. July 9, 2009 – Regular Meeting

It was noted that Tom Pietras was in attendance at the July meeting.

Motion: Kenneth Ryan, to approve the Minutes of the July 9, 2009 with correction noted above.

Second: John Lathrop

Vote: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

Chairman Borne indicated 2.F. would be taken up at this time.

F. Ferguson Woods

1. Trail System – Trail Committee report

Mr. Lathrop gave an update on the trail system for the Trails Committee who walked the site. He referred to a report submitted by Ms. Mary Heffernon dated August 2009. The report included an outline of the trail system. There is a two (2)-loop system, one small loop within a larger loop. Mr. Lathrop noted that where the two trails intersect there is an area that needs some special attention. There is a staging area on the old driveway where there is a pile of dirt that you have to climb over to continue on the trail. Mr. Lathrop suggested that it might be possible to spread that existing material and grade the area to create a road for access along North Branford Road and create some parking. At this time the main entrance is from the west off of Dibble Edge Road. Chairman Borne asked that more information be gathered regarding the access from North Branford Road to see if future access is recommended. Mr. Pietras suggested walking and taking photos of the site for a report to the Mayor.

Mr. Roe, Program Planner, indicated that there are two (2) meetings a year that discuss the maintenance work of Open Space. He believes the next meeting is September 16, 2009. He suggested that the Commission write a letter and submit it as soon as possible regarding this issue of grading in that area.

There was some further discussion of the dirt pile. Ms. Saunders believes that it may have been placed there or left there in an attempt to deal with trespassers. Mr. Lathrop indicated that it looks like a pile of material that was possibly left there from when they did the road.

2. Blazing contract –
Nothing to report.

A. Bertini Park

1. Trail system

- a. Report, Trails Committee – nothing to report
- b. Blazing contract

Ms. O'Hare indicated that when she was out at Tyler Mill there she found overgrown vines everywhere on many trails. The area is in great need of maintenance. The Public Works Department indicated to her that it will not be available to do the work so she would like to fold in maintenance with the blazing contract. The Commission agreed that would be a good idea. There was some discussion about having volunteers do some of the maintenance or cutting of the brush. The Commission had some questions about using volunteers (students) in this case regarding supervision, equipment and/or tools that could be used, and the use of any chemical without an authorized person there to supervise.

B. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Trails System Improvement Program

- a. DEP Recreational Trails Grant (re: southern portion) – status

Mr. Roe indicated that the Federal Highway Administration has approved the funds for trail improvement. Chairman Borne stated that was quite an accomplishment. He thanked and congratulated everyone that was involved. There was discussion about how the funds were to be distributed. Ms. Saunders knew that there was \$5,000 allotted for invasive plant eradication in southern Tyler Mill. Mr. Roe indicated that there is a breakout, of the work program, included in the report. He believes that most of it is for drainage and erosion related issues (repair and blazing mostly). Mr. Roe indicated that the next step is to wait for DEP to send the contract. Once the contract is received, they can proceed to bid the project and get the work done. Ms. Saunders noted that we could add more work to the work in the grant for a contractor to address the invasives.

Mr. Roe suggested, in the future, that the Commission include a cost estimate for each item. It could look at specific elements and get a generic cost for that item plus or minus some additional work.

There was further discussion about where the money should be spent. Ms. Saunders stated that there was a large washed out area at the south end of Tyler Mill Road toward Woodhouse Avenue where, if possible, she would like to have something done. Ms. O'Hare will see if the Engineering Department can view the area and make a recommendation.

Mr. Roe will get the work program distributed. The Commission should revisit the report and prioritize the work that needs to be done.

b. Required maintenance

Discussed above under A. Bertini Park, 1.b. Blazing Contract, above.

2. Deer management proposal

Ms. O'Hare reported a meeting is to be scheduled.

3. DEP Permit Hunting Area – map

Ms. O'Hare indicated that the mapping was complete and passed it around to the Commission. She stated that there was no change to the North Branford area and there was a slight change to the Tyler Mill area as previously discussed.

C. Farmland Lease Properties Program

1. Field 14A – 205 Main Street – encroachment – report, Law Dept.

Ms. O'Hare reported that this issue is in the courts.

2. Field 3A – encroachment – report, staff

The Commission discussed the issue of encroachment and what can be done. The installation of placards was brought up. Ms. O'Hare will check to see if the Engineering Department ever installed the placards. It was decided that if the area is not posted it should be done as soon as possible. Ms. O'Hare indicated that she would report the encroachment to the Town Attorney, send along photos and ask for enforcement. Mr. Pietras suggested that reminder letters be sent out to all of the appropriate homeowners. Planting white pines along this edge was discussed.

3. Gates

Mr. Roe does not believe that the gates were ever installed at Field 7D where there was vehicle trespass. Ms. Saunders noted a gate was also needed at access to Field 7C where the old barbed wire gate is opened by trespassers cutting trees. She feels signs should be added to both gates advising walkers to keep to field perimeters. There was some discussion and the Commission agreed that the gates should be purchased and installed out of money from the Open Space Management Resource Fund. Ms. Saunders brought up the issue of having locks on the gates. Mr. Roe indicated that the Town has locks that they can code especially for farm gates. Ms. O'Hare will coordinate with Mr. Roe.

4. Map updates – field maps and town wide map

Ms. O'Hare reported that she is working on it.

D. Fresh Meadow Swamp at Cheshire Road

1. Wetlands mapping updates

Mr. Pietras will coordinate next week with Ms. O'Hare.

2. Mowing Plan contract – report edits

Nothing to report.

3. Walking Path Concept Plan contract – status & input

Ms. O'Hare reported that she has been speaking with Consultant Anthony Zembe on the upcoming contract. He is looking to get some input on path alignment such as connecting Rosick Road and locating a trail along Cheshire Road adjacent to the road. The Commission decided that there should be no connection to Rosick Road since there is no parking in that area. They discussed the Cheshire Road issue but made no decision at this time. Ms. O'Hare will walk that area to see what she feels would be best in that location and report back to the Commission and she welcomes other input.

4. Old Gate Road property

a. Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co. proposed planting plan & requested easements – status

Ms. O'Hare reported that work is to begin next week with the installation of the pipe. The planting plan has been approved and will be installed as planned.

E. Beseck Mountain

1. Cliffside Trail – boundary plantings

Nothing has been done yet.

2. Encroachment behind 35 Wisk-Key Wind Road – report, Law Dept.

Attorney Mantzaris reported that he spoke with the owner who now claims he did not cut down the trees. He asked Ms. O'Hare to get him a copy of the police report on the incident.

3. Blazing contract

Not discussed.

Choate Environmental Center

Chairman Borne inserted at this time a discussion about the proposed Choate Environmental Center. He asked Ms. O'Hare to report. She indicated that Choate made a very interesting presentation in front of the IWWC at its August 5th meeting. Ms. O'Hare gave a brief summary of the presentation. She provided for the Commission to review a copy of the materials that were handed out to the IWWC.

The overall feeling of the Commission was that the proposed Environmental Center would be a good thing for the town and the students of Wallingford. The Commission looks forward to seeing what type of work is done on the site and what type of information is gathered. The

thought that Choate would work together to advance resource information on open space is very exciting and could provide great benefits for the Town of Wallingford. The Commission is hoping that the public school students have a chance to be incorporated into this program. They are curious to hear some more details on that issue.

Chairman Borne made it clear to the Mayor that the Commission would be in favor of this project and offered to write a letter showing support if necessary.

F. Invasive Species Eradication

1. Long-term invasive species management program – updates, D. Saunders

Dianne Saunders reported planning on using volunteers to map and mark the invasive species but they cannot spray required chemicals. Since the chemical spray has to be done at the same time the cut is made, the volunteers can't accomplish the work. There needs to be an authorized person doing the chemical spray. Ms. Saunders is hoping to get everything together so volunteers can cut and the chemical spray can follow right behind.

2. Annual program expenditure

Not taken up.

G. Volunteer Work Program

Not taken up.

3. PROPERTY DISPOSITIONS:

3. Letters to owners of large property

Mr. Roe feels it is time to send out letters to large property owners. There was discussion about the disposition of many large properties in town. The Commission will put together a list of possible properties to be considered. Mr. Roe will coordinate letter initiative with Ms. O'Hare.

4. Boundary marking upon acquisition – Law Dept.

Ms. O'Hare reported that she discussed this issue with the Law Department. The Law Department Memorandum indicates that the Commission should recommend boundary marking when each property is acquired.

4. GRASSLAND BIRD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT/RESTORATION INITIATIVE:

No update.

5. OPEN SPACE PLAN, 1999

1. Committee update – D. Saunders

Ms. Saunders reported that there have been two meetings and things are off to a good start. However, Ms. O'Hare cannot assist at committee meetings after hours. Ms. Saunders

indicated that she has received an outline from the State. Mr. Lathrop will be drafting the vision statement. Ms. Saunders stated that her goal for completion is March.

6. PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS:

A. Family Day, Saturday, September 12, 2009 12:00 – 4:00 p.m.
There was nothing new to report. Ms. Saunders and Mr. Ryan will be volunteering as previously discussed.

B. Speaker Event

Ms. Saunders reported that Mr. Burns from New England Wildflower would be the scheduled speaker. There are two possible dates, Wednesday, September 23rd or Wednesday, October 14th. Ms. Saunders is waiting for a response to see which date Mr. Burns is available. She reported that the Senior Center is available on both of those dates. She is working on getting booths set up with topics such as organic lawn care, wildlife control, composting, and recycling. Ms. Saunders hopes to get out a mailing once all of the details are worked out. She asked the Commission to think of possible catchy titles for the event. The key is to catch people's attention and peak their interest so they will attend the event.

7. CORRESPONDENCE / REPORTS

A. Quinnipiac River boat launch proposal – status, staff
Ms. O'Hare reported that the Quinnipiac River boat launch is being proposed for Community Lake. The weeds have been cut to allow the surveyors to get in and do their work. As far as Ms. O'Hare knows there is no formal plan being circulated yet. The Commission discussed why that location was chosen. Ms. Saunders feels that Mary Mushinsky would be best qualified to discuss possible locations for the boat launch. The Commission felt strongly that the Quinnipiac River Association should be contacted for its input.

B. America the Beautiful Grant application

Ms. O'Hare reported that there is an \$8,000 maximum that can be requested. The amount is matched 50/50. She feels that the perfect site for this grant money would be the Tyler Mill entrance. Mr. Roe indicated that time management may be an issue. After some discussion of the deadline and amount of work that is required to put it together, Ms. O'Hare stated that she extremely busy and doesn't feel she has the time to do it. Mr. Roe indicated that his office might be able to allocate some time to get the application filed. Mr. Roe will work with Ms. O'Hare to see what she has already done and how much work is left to do.

C. CACIWC membership

Ms. O'Hare indicated that membership is due. The fee is \$50 per commission. After some discussion it was determined that the Conservation Commission would join for the fee of \$50.

D. Other

Ms. O'Hare reported that Frank Lane, Director of Real Estate, Tilcon Co., has contacted Ms. O'Hare and approved the beetle project with certain caveats.

Ms. Saunders stated that she would be attending an event hosted by New England Wildflower in New Hampshire on October 17, 2009. Many of the areas she would be exploring are similar to areas here in Wallingford.

8. NEXT MEETING: September 10, 2009

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: Ken Ryan to adjourn.

Second: Carl Arsenault

Vote: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonja Vining
Recording Secretary