

**WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING**

**Room 315, Town Hall
45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT**

Thursday, December 14, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

[Minutes scheduled to be considered and approved at the next meeting]

Present: Chair Mike Miller, Vice Chair Brad Sammis, Jeff Borne, Dianne Saunders, Jim Pyskaty, Conor Makepeace, Eric Severson, and Erin O’Hare, Environmental Planner

Absent: Dianne Lendler

Chair Miller called the Meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting, Nov. 9, 2023

MOTION: J. Pyskaty, To approve the Minutes.

SECOND: J. Borne

VOTE: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. Stewards of Tyler Mill, Co-Chairs Monthly Report, D. Saunders & D. Lendler
Commissioner Saunders reported on recent work by Stewards.

2. Kiosk – standardized design drawing, measurements, and cost

Chair Miller asked Doug Clark to present the revised kiosk designs and revised cost figures which he had submitted to Ms. O’Hare on Nov. 14. Discussion followed. Both the TMP kiosk and the Ferguson Woods kiosk (discussed together) are to be one-sided. *Ms. O’Hare will follow-up with Mayoral authorization of expenditures and the Trails Work Group can then commence fabrication.*

3. Removal of Interpretive Trail markers – status of approved work

Chair Miller asked Scott Gray, in audience, to report on this Trails Work Group assignment. Mr. Gray indicated that he looked and there were actually no markers, etc. found that had to be removed, so it’s done.

4. Boy Scout Trail – permanent blazing - status

Discussion resulted in the name will be known henceforth as the “Blue/Yellow Trail”. Mr. Gray explained that he did ‘brush-back’ the trail and that the different blazing style (reference to blaze photos at last Meeting) are actually 3-inch big site markers he had installed on the edge of the hayfield for visibility. Chair Miller favored permanent wooden posts to replace the temporary metal stakes used and a standardized uniform blaze system and blaze mark size.

MOTION: D. Lendler moved to keep blazing on this trail as it is currently with larger blaze signs and metal stakes.

Motion was not seconded.

Chair Miller requested all members to go out before next meeting to see current trail blazing conditions for the Boy Scout Trail.

5. .Mapping, staff

Ms. O'Hare reported revisions to TMP mapping are in progress. *Commissioner Saunders will submit mapping of horseback-crossing locations before next Meeting.* Mr. Gray inquired if all the trail revisions enumerated in his Oct. 15 Trails Work Group report, (eleven items), and Nov. 6 (five additional items) will be on the revised map. Consensus was that approved changes to trail alignment or blazing, etc., will continue to be added once they are actually effected in the field however changes not approved by Parks & Rec. Director will not be added until they are both approved and effected in the field.

Chair Miller had Mr. Gray present his report regarding storm damage from the Dec. 11 storm (5 inch-rain event) and the work done clearing tree parts and soil off the trails by himself and Commissioner Saunders.

Ms. O'Hare indicated she got an email today from Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks & Rec., Dept. that gravel had been delivered at the closed bridge. Mr. Gray indicated it was for trail maintenance.

Ms. O'Hare was asked to report to Mr. Michaels that there was a 20-foot eroded issue where the footbridge crosses the Gold Trail.

6. Proposal from K. Michaels, Director, Parks & Recreation, submitted by Doug Clark, regarding two existing unnamed trails that connect to the Boy Scout Trail
Doug Clark, from audience, presented his proposal regarding two existing unnamed trails that connect to the Boy Scout Trail (aka Blue/Yellow Trail). Commissioner Makepeace inquired as to the purpose and hasn't it been rehabilitated? Mr. Gray indicated that folks love it and it connects with other trails, and has no erosion. Chair Miller felt maybe other trails should be eliminated to keep these two trails if these are actually better trails.

Commissioner Saunders said there are over 5 miles of unpermitted trails and we cannot keep up with it. Mr. Gary stated there have been no new trails since the Trails Work Group started. Commissioner Severson reported he sees new trails with pink flags being made non-stop. Commissioner Makepeace stated one role of the Trails Work Group was to remove unpermitted trails. Mr. Gray indicated he will report new unpermitted trails henceforth to Director Michaels. Chair Miller called for an overall policy/broader plan for removal of unauthorized or new trails. Commissioner Saunders requested being issued color-copies of any Proposals that had color in them, and indicated there is a vernal pool in this vicinity which has been cut through by this trail since last March. Mr. Clark indicated these trails offer loop options and bring users to new places. Wayne Fogg, in audience, stated that CFPA has a new trail evaluation form it uses to

determine if it should be brought into the trails system or not. Commissioner Saunders requested Mr. Gray revisit the original request for an overall proposal plan as evaluating trail-related proposals in bits and pieces is not sustainable from an administrative viewpoint or regarding the physical condition of the trails and there should be specific criteria to evaluate trails.

Commissioner Makepeace stated the Commission looks at new trails from an environmental and conservation lens and to protect the Town from liability, and almost the entirety of TMP is within the DEEP Natural Diversity Database Mapping area. He asked Mr. Gray about current trail density. Mr. Gray indicated TMP trials system is less dense compared to Sleeping Giant's system. Commissioner Makepeace called for a policy that unauthorized trails are to be removed as soon as they are noticed, that rare species should be identified in TMP, and that the unpermitted installation of culverts and crossings impacts streams and are wetlands violations.

Chair Miller asked all to walk and evaluate the two trails discussed.

7. Other reports

There were no other reports.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Mowing – staff

Ms. O'Hare reported Dept. of Public Works was asked to mow all the fields preferably not all at once to give wildlife some relief.

2. Tessa's Trail – maintenance

Chair Miller tabled item.

3. Proposal for update to kiosk content, J. Borne

Chair Miller asked Commissioner Borne to install trails map in the kiosk.

4. Proposal regarding maintenance of stone dust trail beds

Ms. O'Hare reported that she would need to prepare an RFQ for this work to be done by contractors and will when she has time.

5. Proposal for signage and kiosk at western drive/parking area.

C. Ferguson Woods

1. Proposal from Parks & Recreation Director submitted by S. Gray for kiosk – location, final design, cost, and funding – status

Ms. O'Hare will follow-up with Mayoral authorization of kiosk expenditures and the Trails Work Group can then commence fabrication.

2. Approved re-routing of a portion of trail off private property & installation of a bog-bridge – status of de-blazing, new trail section creation and blazing & bog-bridge installation work

Ms. O'Hare asked Mr. Gray to submit a materials & cost list for the bog-bridge.

3. Trails Map update - status

Commissioner Makepeace will give shape-file to Engineering Dept. to assist with update to map.

D. Bertini Park

1. Map revisions - status

Ms. O'Hare said it's in progress.

2. Approved signage – status

Ms. O'Hare said it's on the signage fabrication order list.

E. Beseck Mountain

The next three items were taken up as one discussion, below.

1. Boundary re-marking, encroachment & unpermitted vegetation removal
2. Cliffside Trail – evaluation & maintenance
3. Proposal for installation of stone dust path & low timber rail from road to woods edge

Chair Miller asked Wayne Fogg to present the Trail Evaluation Report he had completed after Ms. O'Hare had inquired about his past trail repair work on this trail. It was discussed. Mr. Fogg suggested a bog-bridge as a good idea to cross the wetter portions, described the narrow-opened to define the trail route, proposed his idea of a re-route spur on the ridge to afford viewpoint destination area, noted Town's mapping of Mattebessett Trail is off now since it been moved by CFPA, noted it is not part of the CT Blue-Blazed system, recommended installation of a barrier to ATVs be installed prior to August with contractors to use hand tools only, and that he is available to give guidance and supervision to the trail work. Chair Miller said this trail serves as the emergency access route to the ridgetop so the barrier would have to have a locked gate. Mr. Fogg felt the entrance of the trail was too mushy for stone dust to work well. Commissioner Makepeace called for delineation of the beginning of the trail to distinguish it from the private land on both sides, e.g. arrows with blazes installed on split-rail fencing or posts. No decision was rendered.

4. National Scenic Trail signage – status

Ms. O'Hare will take this on later.

5. Trail signage (Town property boundaries) – status

Ms. O'Hare will take this on later.

F. Marcus Cooke Memorial Park

1. Proposal for trail GPS, re-blazing, mapping, and signage

Chair Miller tabled this item.

Mr. Gray handed in a fact sheet regarding the new Beech tree disease and left the Meeting at this time. *Chair Miller will email a copy of it to Commissioners.*

G. Wharton Brook/Doolittle Park

1. Proposed kiosk location, staff
2. Riparian corridor vegetation management

Chair Miller tabled this item.

H. Other Property - reports

There were none.

3. PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP & MONITORING REPORTS

A. Whirlwind Hill/Scard Rd & 1254 Whirlwind Hill Rd., D. Lendler

Commissioner Lendler reported 1254 Whirlwind Hill Road is largely open filed that is mowed by the abutter and that there are no issues on either property.

4. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Field 20A – Contractor report

Ms. O'Hare summarized the report completed by Eric Hansen, Ferrucci & Walicki, who had indicated he is available to install conservation management area verses hay marker posts in the field. Chair Miller said this issue will be taken up by the Farmland Lease Committee for a resolution regarding any revisions in areas and the installation of posts for orientation.

B. Bid proposal (20 hay fields) - staff

Ms. O'Hare indicated delays in the bid going out but it went up to Purchasing Dept. on Dec. 4 where it will go out for advertising.

C. Farmland Lease Committee

1. Field Monitoring Reports

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Executive Session pursuant to CT General Statutes 1-225(F) and Sect. 1-200(6) for the discussion of the selection of real estate for possible purchase

MOTION: C. Makepeace, To go into Executive Session

SECOND: J. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

Commission went into Executive Session at 9:03 p.m.

MOTION: C. Makepeace, To come out of Executive Session

SECOND: J. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

Commission came out of Executive Session at 9:12 p.m.

6. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Trails Work Group – TWG information/matters not discussed above, D. Lendler
Not taken up.

B. CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions (CACIWC) –
Annual Conference, Bristol Event Center, 112 Century Drive, Bristol, CT, 11/17/23
No members had attended.

C. Gray-Wulff Environmental Series: “The Temptation of Trees”, film & discussion,
Community Room, Wallingford Public Library, Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m. – reports

D. Memorandum from Mayor, re: 2024 General Assembly Session – legislative or
regulatory proposals, dated 12/1/23; deadline Dec. 27

7. NEXT MEETING - January 11, 2024

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Miller adjourned the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner
Acting Recording Secretary