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DRAFT

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING
Room 315, Town Hall
45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT

Thursday, October 10, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Chair Conor Makepeace, Vice Chair Bruce Conroy, Commissioners Mike Miller, Jeff Borne, Dianne Saunders, Erik Severson, Jim Pyskaty, and Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner

Absent: Dianne Lendler

Attendees from the public were Scott Gray, Trails Work Group Coordinator, and Ryan Bell, student.

Note: *Italics used in text below represent action items.*

Chair Makepeace called the Meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.. He then requested Vice Chair Conroy chair the Meeting, but remained and participated.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Acting Chair Conroy called for consideration of the Minutes.

MOTION: J. Pyskaty, To approve the Minutes as presented.

SECOND: J. Borne

VOTE: Unanimous

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Fresh Meadows

1. Kiosk content & map

No action yet on this work item.

2. Graffiti, two areas - status

Commissioner Miller indicated he will be wire-brushing the graffiti off soon.

3. Butterfly Loop Trail & Pond Trail

- a. Mowing at key spots

Ms. O'Hare indicated she had addressed the item with Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks & Recreation and Rob Baltramitis, Director, Public Works Dept.. She reported the bench purchased a few years ago, is now installed at north side of Butterfly Meadow Loop Trail with a pond view.

- b. Work project to restore 5-foot width

Ms. O'Hare indicated she had addressed the item with Mr. Michaels and Mr. Baltramaitis and the decision was that the work needs to be contracted out. *She will prepare an RFQ with assistance from other departments.*

Ms. O'Hare reported bittersweet vines on trees next to the trails and an overgrowth of mugwort cascading onto the Cheshire Trail near mid-way point and she passed photos taken this week. Mr. Baltramaitis indicated a contractor needed to address these two issues. *She will follow-up on best timing and methods for the work.*

Ms. O'Hare will request that Mr. Baltramaitis relocate the boulders located at the terminus of the Cheshire Trail which had been moved further apart.

4. Glacial erratic signage – replacement

Ms. O'Hare indicated she did not yet order the signage but will do so.

B. Ferguson Woods

1. Trails maintenance and bogbridge

Scott Gray, Trails Work Group Coordinator, indicated the work has been completed and, in addition, the trail has been re-routed as approved.

2. Kiosk

Mr. Gray indicated the work has not yet been completed by Trails Work Group.

Ms. O'Hare passed a photo of a wooden property name sign affixed to a tree at the end of the cul-de-sac of Dibble Edge Road. Mr. Gray stated he had installed it temporarily until the kiosk is installed.

C. 155 Grieb Road

1. Trespass/dumping

Commissioner Miller reported he went to the property and observed wetlands and only minor dumping of leaves and yard waste on the edges.

D. Bat box installations

Ms. O'Hare was requested to obtain a quote for the work and will do so.

Commissioner Saunders indicated that now that the hay has been cut she will take prospective bidders out to the locations and noted that the Field #18A location would require lessee notice due to cattle there.

E. Mayoral Open Space Management Meeting

Ms. O'Hare indicated no date had been set yet.

F. Marcus Cooke Park

1. Presentation of proposals

Commissioner Makepeace indicated this proposal was approved by the Commission in the spring and that recently he had re-sent the proposal to Mr. Michaels who had then approved the proposed changes and also the removal of the Girl Scout trails map. The trail re-route will no longer require IWWC permitting, he said.

2. Trails map

Commissioner Makepeace indicated the shape files for the trails map had been forwarded and the new trails map will be printed by the Engineering Department and installed by members once the re-route has been completed. *Ms. O'Hare will follow-up with Engineering Dept.*

G. Park Maps

Commissioner Makepeace indicated the shape files for the trails maps for Ferguson Woods and Marcus Cooke had been forwarded. Fresh Meadows was forwarded previously.

The 2021 version of the Tyler Mill Preserve is posted on the Parks & Recreation website awaiting a newer version. Mr. Gray stated there were many errors on the April Draft Trails map he had obtained from Ms. O'Hare for his review. When Acting Chair Conroy requested Mr. Gray share that map information with the Commission, Mr. Gray declined to share the errors but indicated he would meet with the Mayor about them.

H. Other property issues
None reported.

3. PROPERTY MONITORING REPORTS

A. 205 Main Street, Yalesville, B. Conroy

Acting Chair Conroy said due to very wet field conditions he will report at the next Meeting.

4. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee - D. Saunders, Chair

1. Committee Meeting, Basement Conference Room, Aug. 12, 5:00 p.m..

Committee Chair Saunders summarized the Meeting and noted the Minutes are posted.

2. Field 14A – plan for field mowing & perimeter mowing encroachment

Committee Chair Saunders indicated the field needs mowing. Ms. O'Hare will inquire again with Water Division on its plans in this regard.

3. Field 20A

Ms. O'Hare passed photos taken this week of road and bamboo. The Commission's consensus was that the periodic cutting of the bamboo needed four times a season to mitigate its overgrowth on the access road needs to be contracted out. Ms. O'Hare will follow-up. She reported that the recent road repair looked great with the exception of sizable curbing installed which directs the flows down the steep road directly to the stream on both sides. She indicated 'leak-offs' should be installed.

4. Other updates

Committee Chair Saunders reported Lessee Ray Johnson will be terminating his leases on Fields 4A, 4C, 5A, 7A, 8B, and 19A and is currently busy completing mowing as required in the lease terms. She reported lessee Cecarelli Farms got crops wiped out on Fields 1A and 1C by the recent severe hailstorm event.

5. PROFESSIONAL NATURAL RESOURCES SERVICES

A. RFQ – GPS trails and features in TMP

Ms. O'Hare indicated she has not yet sent the RFQ for this contract work out but will do so.

6. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT – TYLER MILL PRESERVE

A. Stewards of Tyler Mill, Co-Chairs Monthly Report, D. Saunders & D. Lendler

Co-Chair Saunders gave report; the 'soft trail' work on sunny trail edges has 'held up over a three month period'. She reported that the mountain bike race event that had

been scheduled for the opening day of hunting has been rescheduled for the next day. Stewards will install yellow hunting signs a few days before the opening. Ms. O'Hare asked how many Daily Permits are issued for one day typically. Acting Chair Conroy responded about 20 to 30 a day in TMP, shotgun and muzzleloader only, and records are available from DEEP if needed.

B. Presentation of trail proposals

Commissioner Makepeace said he (as Chair) had recently met with the Mayor and explained that the proscribed 60-day time limit for acceptance of a proposal will start with the presentation of the proposal; should there not be a quorum then the Commission could hold a Special Meeting to act on it. Mr. Michaels forwards complete proposals to the Commission at least one week prior to the Meeting to get on the agenda. The Mayor agreed that a "complete proposal" is defined as, at the time of its submittal to the Commission, it meets three criteria put forth by Chair Makepeace: description of proposal, need for the proposed change, and a map depicting the proposed change superimposed on a copy of the Official Trails map. Commission proposals must go through this process as well. An approved trail change may still need permitting from other agencies he stressed.

Mr. Gray stated that he talk to the Mayor yesterday and believes the 60 days started when the Aug. 6 memorandum was received.

Acting Chair Conroy called for motions on the respective trails proposals noting that the numbering and names of proposals shall be taken from the attachment to the Letter to Conservation Commission from Mayor Cervoni, dated 8/6/24.

1. "Adopt two sections of unblazed trail" (Doug Clark)

Ms. O'Hare reported the proposal had been presented at the April 11 Meeting. It was discussed tonight only briefly therefore. Commissioner Miller noted that most of the members have walked this trail.

MOTION: D. Saunders, We do not recommend this trail be made an Official Trail and, as such, it will not be maintained, due to three factors: it is located too close to a vernal pool, there are already too many trails in that area, and a few steep trails have recently been made that enter it.

SECOND: J. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

2. "Reblaze and extend the Gold Trail" (Scott Gray)

Ms. O'Hare reported the proposal had been presented at the February 8 Meeting and discussed again at the April 11 Meeting but not acted on.

MOTION: M. Miller, To approve.

SECOND: E. Severson

VOTE: Unanimous

Ms. O'Hare noted it will require wetlands permitting.

3. "Reroute the northern end of the Pink Trail" (Scott Gray)

Mr. Gray presented the proposal noting the re-route is 75 feet in length and he passed a copy of a map for it around.

MOTION: M. Miller, To approve to be completed and then to be added to the Official Trails Map.

SECOND: E. Severson

VOTE: Unanimous

Commissioner Saunders stated that the three concrete blocks located near the current trail head should remain in place as a deterrent.

4. "Reroute the northern end of the Mustard Trail" (Scott Gray)

Mr. Gray presented the proposal clarifying that two of the existing switch-backs are eroded.

MOTION: D. Saunders, To table proposal until members have an opportunity to do a site walk and discuss at next Meeting.

SECOND: E. Severson

VOTE: Unanimous

5. "Reroute on the Blue South Trail" (Dianne Lendler)

Mr. Gray presented the proposal summary he had written and also presented Trail Work Group Coordinator Lendler's proposal with a map.

MOTION: J. Borne, To table comments tonight and make a field visit to this site and be prepared to make a recommendation at the next Meeting

SECOND: J. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

C. Eradication work

Commissioner Saunders reported on treatment of certain areas in TMP to meet contract. She noted that 100 sprouts have emerged at the treated Tree of Heaven site but they have to reach a certain size before treatment is effective.

D. DEEP CT Recreational Trails Grant Program – Preserve plan grant, D. Saunders

Commissioner Saunders will address this at next Meeting.

E. DEEP Forestry consultation, D. Saunders

Commissioner Saunders will email DEEP form to Ms. O'Hare for finalizing and submittal to DEEP.

F. Graffiti

Commissioner Saunders reported that a portion of the graffiti has been painted over by someone.

7. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

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

Mr. Gray handed out copies of the August TWG Report and September TWG Report for the members to read. The hailstorm event resulted in a lot of trail maintenance work for the TWG. The report indicated that in August the TWG had installed a

presentation display, entitled “Trails in Wallingford”, at the Library with “a comprehensive listing of town trails and maps, as well as trails related display items.” which was taken down today. Commissioner Saunders said the Commission would like to have been informed about the display so that they could have seen it. Mr. Gray responded that the Commission would have learned about the display but the September Meeting was cancelled.

Acting Chair Conroy requested henceforth for Mr. Gray to email Commissioners copies of the reports to save time at the Meeting.

Commissioner Makepeace reminded Mr. Gray that the Purple Trail at Marcus Cooke Park is not to be maintained anymore as it is not a Town trail. Commissioner Saunders reminded Mr. Gray that the Town has protocols for how invasive plants near trails are to be maintained.

B. Open Space Users Group Meeting, Parks & Recreation Dept. – meeting date tbd

Ms. O’Hare indicated a date has not been set.

8. NEXT MEETING: Nov. 14, 2024

Commissioner Saunders announced that CACIWC Annual Conference is Nov. 16 and the reduced registration fee deadline is Oct. 16.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: J. Borne, To adjourn the Meeting.

SECOND: J. Pyskaty

VOTE: Unanimous

Acting Chair Conroy adjourned the Meeting at 8:05 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,

Erin O’Hare, Environmental Planner
Acting Recording Secretary

Individuals in need of auxiliary aids for the effective communication in programs and services of the Town of Wallingford are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance Coordinator at 203-294-2070 five days prior.