

Final / Approved

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

**Thursday, January 14, 2021, 6:00 p.m.
Room #1, Parks & Recreation Department
6 Fairfield Boulevard, Wallingford, CT**

Note: The January 14, 2021, Regular Meeting in Town Hall for 7:00 p.m. was cancelled and a Special Meeting was set and held at Room #1, Parks & Recreation Department, 6 Fairfield Boulevard, Wallingford, CT, at 6:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Present: Chair Mary Heffernon and Commissioners Dianne Saunders, Jared McQueen, Brad Sammis, and Jeffrey Borne. Environmental Planner Erin O’Hare. Commissioners Mike Miller and Carl Arsenault arrived as noted below.

Absent: Vice Chair John Lathrop and Commissioner Dianne Lendler.

Chair Heffernon called this Special Meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

1. ADELHEID KOEPFER – ‘Sustainable Connecticut’

Ms. Koepfer showed slides and explained about this voluntary certification program for cities and towns. She told how government, citizens, and groups could work toward enrolling Wallingford. Cheshire and other communities have qualified. The object is to promote economic, environmental and social well-being while respecting the finite capacity of the natural environment. Component projects would take time to demonstrate community “sustainability”. Local funds would be raised for part of the enrollment fee, and the group could apply for a matching grant. Ms. Koepfer described how the Conservation Commission could assist on some of the 13 categories. Questions and answers followed. Commissioners Miller and Arsenault arrived at 7:15 p.m. Chair Heffernon noted that it would take some time to achieve a community designation. Ms. O’Hare asked if efforts are required to maintain the designation. Ms. Koepfer and her associates are developing a support petition for this effort. Chair Heffernon thanked Ms. Koepfer for her presentation.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Motion was made by Commissioner Miller to nominate Mary Heffernon as Chair; seconded by Commissioner McQueen, and approved unanimously.

Chair Heffernon reported that Vice Chair Lathrop is willing to serve again.

Motion was made by Commissioner Miller to nominate John Lathrop as Vice Chair; seconded by Commissioner McQueen, and approved unanimously.

3. ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report was completed by Chair Heffernon. Chair Heffernon will send it to Mayor Dickinson and the Town Council and to Mr. Kenny Michaels, Director of Parks and Recreation.

Motion by Commissioner Saunders to approve the Annual Report; seconded by Commissioner Borne and approved unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Special Meeting, Dec. 10, 2020 - Corrections were made as follows:

p. 1 at 2.A.1., paragraph 1, sentence 4, to correct to say: *“Chair Heffernon offered to help on this.”*

p. 1 at 2.A.1., paragraph 2, sentence 8, to delete “ground” and to insert “sensitive” before “habitat.” and to delete the rest of the sentence.

p. 1 at 2.A.1., paragraph 3, to delete the first sentence.

p. 3 at 5.B., paragraph 1, sentence 4, to rephrase saying, *“The Commissioners asked Ms. O’Hare and Commissioner Saunders to compile a letter on behalf of the Commission.”*

Motion by Commissioner McQueen to approve the December 10, 2020 Minutes as amended; seconded by Commissioner Sammis, and approved unanimously.

5. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Saunders will notify the Steward that two large trees are down on the Purple Trail.

Commissioner McQueen left the meeting at 7:00 p.m. See Item 2. after 3. below.

3. Other reports.

Illegal trails were found constructed at Tyler Mill Preserve. Persons have constructed and posted unapproved trails. Some bikers use those and go onto private property also. Commissioner Arsenault said the signs with Town rules should be more durable and larger. *Chair Heffernon has contacted the New England Mountain Bikers Association*, whose representatives had come to a meeting last year. Chair Heffernon suggested organizing work parties to close trails. Commissioner Miller has talked directly with bikers. Ms. O’Hare suggested instituting a fine for unauthorized creation or maintaining such trails, and that regulation could be advertised in bikers newsletters. Commissioners agreed that bike trespassers and trail makers should be seen, photographed, and reported to police. It is costly to repair unapproved trails. *Chair Heffernon will meet with the Police, Law Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and the Mayor on methods of communication and enforcement. Commissioner Saunders will provide another trails map with unauthorized trails depicted to Ms. O’Hare for the Commissioners.*

2. Northford Road / Muddy River Bridge Reconstruction at Tyler Mill Road

Commissioner Saunders wrote to the Wetlands Commission (IWWC) on behalf of the Conservation Commission. Ms. O’Hare conferred with the Engineering Department and IWWC regarding turtle protection

in this vicinity. The IWWC approved this bridge reconstruction application on January 6. The Town Engineer is hiring a herpetologist as soon as possible to critique and monitor the plan relative to turtle conservation and protection. Construction work starts in April 2022.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Addition of name on Town Open Space property signage
Ms. O’Hare said the signs are being fabricated.

C. 205 Main Street Open Space property

1. Encroachment - No report.

2. Repair of Town open space property signage
Ms. O’Hare said this repair is underway.

D. Beseck Meadows

1. Encroachment - No report.

2. Bamboo – encroachment & management

Chair Heffernon stated that using Imazopyr on bamboo is not recommended by Jeff Ward at the CT Agricultural Experiment Station because it can affect other vegetative growth. Chair Heffernon said now is the cutting time. *Ms. O’Hare will ask Public Works Superintendent Steve Palermo to cut the bamboo to ground level now, chip it and let it lie, without disturbing the soil.* To clarify: The Commission will hire a vendor to treat the bamboo area in the spring.

E. Other properties

1. Other - At the Fresh Meadows knoll, Commissioners Saunders and Arsenault recommended that Tree of Heaven sprouts should be cut now. Ms. Emily Picard of the Lyman Hall Vocational Science program is looking for a project for her students. *Commissioner Arsenault and Chair Heffernon agreed to mark the Tree of Heaven sprouts. Chair Heffernon will communicate with Ms. Picard about doing this work.*

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Commissioner Borne to go into Executive Session at 7:50 p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Miller, and approved unanimously.

The Commissioners attended the Executive Session.

Motion was made by Commissioner Borne to come out of Executive Session at 7:56 p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Miller, and approved unanimously.

Chair Heffernon stated that no action was to be taken as a result of Executive Session.

7. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee

No report.

B. Bid proposals: Fields 5A, 7A, & 8B

Ms. O'Hare said no action has been taken.

C. Field 7A, Northford Rd. – hunter parking proposal

Commissioner Saunders said this Field 7A area is cut. But she advised that the driveway is a blind exit. *Ms. O'Hare will remind Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis about the request to install gravel in the Right-Of-Way.*

D. Several fields – compliance with lease terms.

Ms. O'Hare and the Farmland Lease Committee will review the status of compliance together.

Commissioner Saunders left the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

8. PUBLIC EVENTS – Trails Day, June 5 & 6

Commission members agreed that, given the unpredictability of the pandemic, they would not plan a Trails Day event this year.

9. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. CT Butterfly Association newsletter, Early Winter 2020; received 12/22/20.

B. DEEP Grant Notification – ‘Aquatic Invasive Species Control on Lakes, Ponds, and Rivers’, due date Feb.12, 2021; received 12/22/20

Ms. O'Hare suggested applying for Phragmites control in the area behind Tyler Mill raceway. Then Commissioner Borne brought up the Phragmites issue on the Cuneo property. *Chair Heffernon will research the DEEP grant in connection with Phragmites.*

Commissioner Borne asked what weed is growing around Lucky Pond. Ms. O'Hare said it is canary grass—but the area is too big to eradicate, a half acre, and clearing it out would only invite other invasives. Commissioner Borne suggested grass or trees could be planted there. Chair Heffernon suggested that the Commission could use pool covers on that area for 1-2 years to eradicate invasives, as it worked well at Ferguson Woods.

C. Commission Contact Sheet – update

Each Commissioner is to inform the office of any changes.

D. CFPA newsletter, Rock, Root & Trail, November 2020; received 12/17/2020

E. CT Farmland Trust – donation appeal, emailed on 12/23/20; received 1/5/21

10. NEXT MEETING – February 11, 2021

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Borne to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Arsenault, and approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary