

**Final / Approved**

**WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**SPECIAL MEETING**

**Thursday, July 8, 2021, 6:00 p.m.**

**Basement Conference Room, Town Hall**

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

Note: The July 8, 2021 Regular Meeting in Town Hall for 7:00 p.m. was cancelled and a Special Meeting was set at Marcus Cooke Park, 9 Old Rock Hill Road, Wallingford, CT, at 6:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to inclement weather, the meeting was duly posted as moved from Marcus Cooke Park to the Town Hall Basement Conference Room.

**Present:** Chair Mary Heffernon, Vice Chair John Lathrop, and Commissioners Jared McQueen, Dianne Saunders, Dianne Lendler, Carl Arsenault, and Mike Miller, and Environmental Planner Erin O’Hare.

**Absent:** Commissioners Brad Sammis and Jeffrey Borne.

There was one person from the public plus the Recording Secretary.

Chair Heffernon called the Meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. Special Meeting, May 13, 2021**

These corrections were made by Commissioner Saunders:

p. 1, at 2.A.1., third sentence should read: “Students made a story map using technology for the blow-down area between the Green and Purple Trails.”

p. 2, at 2.A.5., to correct the Motion as: “Motion was made by Commissioner Miller to pay a total of \$117.00 for signs, paint and supplies”.

**Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2021 as corrected; seconded by Commissioner McQueen, and approved unanimously.**

Note: The June 10 Special Meeting had been cancelled for lack of a quorum.

**2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

**A. Tyler Mill Preserve**

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

Commissioner Saunders reported that she and the Stewards cleared part of Red Trail North and South; also, someone mowed fields there. Some Emergency-numbered signs were missing, some were switched, and some were turned upside down. *Chair Heffernon said the police will be notified.* Also, Commissioner Saunders reported that someone was rescued recently on the Red North Trail.

Commissioner Arsenault arrived at 6:08 p.m.

Commissioner Saunders reported they repaired the crossing at the Lilac Trail, and ants were found

eating the foot of the wood signpost. *Commissioner Saunders will notify the Water Department to repair it.* Commissioner Miller arrived at 6:17 p.m.

2. Bat boxes

Ms. O'Hare indicated three bat boxes were purchased with FY 20/21 – 'Professional Services - Natural Resources' funds. *Ms. O'Hare will get a quote for someone to install them in the fall.* Commissioner Saunders thought that Lyman Hall High School students from the wildlife curriculum and Vocational Science-Ag students could do the needed work.

3. Tupelo trees

Ms. O'Hare said year-end 'Professional Services - Natural Resources' funds were spent to buy a number of tupelo trees and a bush, which were planted by EarthTones. Commissioner Saunders put deer fencing and watering gaiters around the tupelos. Ms. O'Hare bought several bluebird boxes and pails with the remaining funds.

4. Green Trail repair – report

Commissioners agreed with the consultant's finding that the area's hydrology is changed. Water comes onto the Green Trail, and there is no culvert or path to take it. The consultant suggested installing a bridge. *Commissioner Miller asked to propose this as an Eagle Scout project, which he will follow up on.*

5. Kiosk signage - Commissioner Saunders said the sign corrections have not been added yet. *She will add them.*

6. Mowing - Commissioner Saunders is looking to rent the mower.

7. Other reports

*Chair Heffernon will discuss with Mayor Dickinson the issue of missing Emergency-numbered signs and the "Proceed with care" signs, some of which have also been stolen.*

**B. Fresh Meadows**

1. 'No Idling' signage

Chair Heffernon has had no response yet from Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels about the installation of signage.

2. Peninsula by southern parking area entrance

Ms. O'Hare reported that a boulder will be installed here, per her request to Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis.

**C. 205 Main Street** open space property

1. Fencing

Ms. O'Hare said that Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis will need to obtain a new contractor to install the fencing.

**D. Beseck Meadows**

1. Encroachment over southern property line – This was discussed in May.

2. Bamboo – cutting & private encroachment by bamboo

Ms. O’Hare said that Corporation Counsel Janis Small has requested a map to be made by the Engineering Department, and then she will write a letter to the neighbors about the bamboo in violation.

3. Boundary line proposal

Ms. O’Hare reported that no posts will be placed as it is only a small encroachment.

**E. Cliffside Drive trail**

Chair Heffernon said no meeting has been set yet with the Public Works Director.

**F. Property Monitoring Reports**

1. J. McQueen, Marcus Cooke Park

Commissioner McQueen walked Marcus Cooke Park a while ago. Trails are well used. He observed mountain bike tracks, but not on the trail. He saw some invasive plants, but the park is in good shape overall. More people enter from Southwinds to walk. He did see deer, a coyote, a turkey and a large dog being walked.

2. D. Saunders, Cooke Rd.

Commissioner Saunders said this property is overgrown, so it should be cut now. She noted, the southwest corner still needs to be marked with Open Space markers. *Ms. O’Hare will follow-up on markers.* There is only a single Open Space marker at the southwest corner which marks along that road and one on the north border by the Kranyak property.

3. D. Lendler, 1254 Whirlwind Hill Rd., 1390 Whirlwind Hill Rd. & Scard Rd.

Commissioner Lendler pointed out that one perimeter of the field has been mowed often by the neighbor. Ms. O’Hare noted the property does not have water frontage and the address is actually 1242 Whirlwind Hill Road. *Ms. O’Hare will provide Commissioner Lendler with large maps of certain properties.*

**G. Grand Street garden**

Old soil needs to come out, and new soil is to be put in, which is holding up the planting plans. *Ms. O’Hare will call Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis.*

**H. Other properties – None.**

**3. BUDGET FY 20-21 – Professional Services – Natural Resources – report**

Ms. O’Hare said that a lot was accomplished before the end of the last fiscal year. EarthTones planted the tupelo trees below Field 8B, 80 Northford Road.

**4. BUDGET FY 21-22 – Professional Services – Natural Resources – proposed uses**

*Ms. O’Hare asked all the Commissioners to develop a list of proposed uses now for this current budget line.* Her suggestions are: to eliminate remaining Japanese knotwood at Tyler Mill Preserve and to do mechanical eradication—cutting and pulling—of invasives at Fresh Meadows; proposed ecological assessment and evaluation of properties, e.g., for 1364 Scard Road (40 acres) and George Washington Trail (9.3 acres), Beseck Mountain area, Ferguson Woods, or the two properties off Dibble Edge Road. Ms. O’Hare suggested that the Commission should choose one Town-acquired property to

be ecologically assessed each year. She showed a photo of the large tarp over the Japanese knotweed, which eradicated a good portion of it at Ferguson Woods. Commissioner Saunders recommended spray-painting at the foot of Town-property trees to indicate property boundaries.

*Commissioner Saunders will make a “Plan for the Turtles Area” in connection with the work to be done under the Northford Road bridge.*

## **5. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM**

### **A. Farmland Lease Committee**

Commissioner Saunders reported that one lessee has 11 properties, but he has not done the required maintenance mowing on any of them. Chair Heffernon asked Ms. O’Hare to set a meeting with the lessee as soon as possible. *Ms. O’Hare will set up this meeting, and Commissioners Saunders and Miller will attend.*

Commissioner Lendler left the meeting at 7:38 p.m.

*Commissioner Saunders will remind the Farmland Lease Properties Committee members and to do Field Monitoring Reports for summer.* Certain (unleased) fields need to be mowed, and the Commission needs to hire those out.

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

*Ms. O’Hare will get the lease bid documents done now. Commissioner Saunders will ask farmers that may be able to mow Field 8B for us soon.*

### **C. Field 7A, Northford Rd. – hunter parking proposal - No report.**

### **D. Fields 7B, 7C, 7D – gate**

Ms. O’Hare said the gate cannot be ordered as there are issues with the Town’s fence contractor.

### **E. Several fields – compliance with lease terms**

*Ms. O’Hare will meet with the Farmland Lease Committee to review each of the Farmland Lease Documents: review concerns, do field checks, decide on lease components, and specify compliance and noncompliance.*

## **6. OPEN SPACE USERS GROUP MEETING – report**

Commissioner Miller commended Chair Heffernon and Commissioner Saunders on leading this meeting very well on May 25 at the Parks and Recreation Department. Attending were three persons from the public, all Conservation Commissioners, some Tyler Mill Preserve Stewards, two mountain bikers, and Mayor William Dickinson, Jr.

Chair Heffernon moved to Agenda 8. Data Centers.

## **8. DATA CENTERS**

Data centers have been proposed to be located in Wallingford. There are several around the country. Chair Heffernon indicated the Town has reached a tentative agreement to have three data centers located in Town, each on a separate campus. In discussion tonight, Commissioners said they did not have much

specific information yet. They pointed out the extensive amount of property with setbacks to be required for each and the possible loss of farmland, which Ms. O'Hare noted has been a long-term Commission concern. Data centers are water and electricity users and need the usual municipal, fire and protective services. One Commissioner expressed reservations about data centers as a new use in Town. Ms. O'Hare said the State legislature has passed a bill promoting this use. Certain zones would be affected, likely IX and I-5. To allow this new use in Wallingford, zoning provisions for the use would have to be drafted, proposed, heard at public hearings, and then adopted into the Zoning Regulations. Conservation Commissioners were interested to see whether the applicants could provide additional open space for the Town plus adequate setbacks, e.g., for abutting Land Trust property. The Commissioners may pursue formal or informal input, and Chair Heffernon thought Commissioners could contribute to the Town discussions.

Chair Heffernon announced that she will be moving out of Wallingford soon.

## **9. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE**

Ms. O'Hare named these receipts:

**A. CFPA magazine, CT Woodlands, Summer 2021**

**B. CT Butterfly Association magazine, Summer 2021**

At this time, the one person from the public left the meeting.

The Commission returned to Agenda Item 7.

## **7. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

**Motion by Commissioner Miller to go into Executive Session; seconded by Vice Chair Lathrop, and approved unanimously.**

The Recording Secretary left the room at 8:04 p.m.

Then Recording Secretary was called back into the room at 8:13 p.m.

**Motion by Vice Chair Lathrop to come out of Executive Session; seconded by Commissioner McQueen, and approved unanimously.**

## **10. NEXT MEETING – August 12, 2021**

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Commissioner McQueen to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Vice Chair Lathrop, and approved unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns, Recording Secretary