

Draft

MINUTES

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, October 13, 2022, 6:00 p.m.

Room 315, Town Hall

45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT

This Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was held on Thursday, October 13, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 315 of Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT.

Present: Chair Mike Miller and Commissioners Dianne Lendler, Dianne Saunders, James Pyskaty, and Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare.

Absent: Vice Chair John Lathrop and Commissioners Jeffrey Borne and Carl Arsenault, Jared McQueen, Brad Sammis.

Also present were seven persons from the public.

Chair Miller called the Meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. He asked the Commissioners for consensus to continue, and all agreed. Being that there was not a quorum, no action motions were made and no votes were taken. Chair Miller and the Commissioners proceeded to discuss different points on the agenda, and the audience persons joined in the discussion.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 11, 2022 – Not considered.

B. September 8, 2022 Meeting – (cancelled)

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Proposal – eradication of Trees of Heaven on 3 properties

This work was described by Ms. O'Hare later in the meeting. We just learned that Trees of Heaven growing within one mile of a vineyard or an orchard will attract spotted lanternflies, which threaten grapes and tree fruit. Ms. O'Hare said Bob Baker completed contract work clearing vegetation away from the invasive Trees of Heaven. A licensed contractor needed to be hired to chemically treat the basal bark of the Trees of Heaven. Frequently, clonal growth springs from the remaining roots. Mr. William Reddy, a member of the public, recommended to kill/bag/collect and dispose of or to destroy Spotted Lanternfly egg cases which look like tree bark.

B. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

This report was not given.

2. Green Trail footbridge – status

An Inland Wetlands permit was obtained from the IWWC, and this Bogbridge was constructed and installed recently using logs from fallen cedars in Tyler Mill. Dr. Joe Robles said he met the Town Risk Manager, Kurt Treiber, Jr., there at pre-construction, and he was fine with it. Some persons in attendance had participated in the 10-day construction, and Steward Scott Gray observed it on behalf of Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks and Recreation Department. Ms. O'Hare showed her photos of the completed bridge. Mr. Ken Roe said that Mr. Michaels went out to see it. It is 140 feet long and 32 inches wide with room for horses along the side.

3. Boy Scout Trail

Commissioner Lendler suggested to blaze this newly approved trail with BCA colors blue and gold, which is under consideration. Ms. O'Hare indicated it will be added to the Trails System Map once it is blazed.

4. Proposal to Trails Administrator regarding trail blazing

Mr. Scott Gray, a Steward of Tyler Mill Preserve, recently had submitted three proposals to Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels. Ms. O'Hare indicated she has not received copies yet.

1. In the Trail Blazing proposal, Scott Gray described the existing colors and new colors that are proposed. The blaze markers here could be similar to Connecticut Forest and Park Association and mountain club signs by having the primary color blaze larger at the top and another color smaller at the bottom on the sign. Plastic colored blazes can be purchased and then nailed with aluminum roofing nails not fully in, to allow the tree trunk to grow without growing over the sign. Ms. O'Hare asked if Scott's proposed system would use two signs offset, indicating a turn, and he said Yes. Commissioner Saunders asked whether Tyler Mill needs more blaze colors. Scott said, Yes, for the Boy Scout Trail and for other trails that we may reroute—main colors would stay as they are. Commissioner Saunders said volunteers like to come in and paint the blazes. Scott indicated the sign size is 2" x 6". If the Red Trail is intersected by the Yellow Trail, the top half would be red and the bottom half would be yellow.

2. The second proposal involves improving the trails system by eliminating "piggy-backs". Commissioner Saunders has seen other signage systems use color and shape to indicate the kind of terrain ahead. Dr. Joe Robles suggested signing trails for use by horses, people. Scott Gray is looking to arrive at a color blazing protocol, and he will return with that. He suggested to eliminate "trail piggy-back markings" on the map (places where multiple loops occupy one footprint, which confuse persons who are not familiar with the land). Commissioner Lendler brought up that Ferguson Woods and Bertini Park also have "piggy-backs".

Chair Miller asked for a consensus by Commissioners here as to a blazing system by Scott Gray. They agreed that Scott should return to the Commission with suggested colors for trails. Ms. O'Hare, commenting as the Environmental Planner, indicated she did not prefer plastic blazes as time in the woods is a reprieve from plastic. So she prefers painted blazes. Also, Commissioner Saunders asked Scott to

provide a map. Chair Miller said he will report to Mr. Michaels in the interim on the topics of suggested blaze changes, trail changes, and possibly eliminating “piggy-backs”.

3. The third proposal was the proposed closure of the South Red Trail along the Muddy River. That area regularly floods and bridges wash out; multiple sections go under water from rainfall. Soil runoff and silting compromise that area in the riparian zone and downriver. Mr. Gray would like to change the current course at emergency marker #37 to be southeasterly along the dirt and gravel road to the junction with Tyler Mill Road until it rejoins the existing Red Trail. An alternative would be to raise and re-blaze the trail over these sections. Commissioner Saunders asked Mr. Gray for a map of this proposal. Dr. Robles noted the Kings Mark group said that trail is 100% in wetlands. It is doable when it is nice, but it’s not when it rains. A 2002 environmental and sediment report noted the sediment and vegetation erosion there, he said. People still fish there. It was closed temporarily. Commissioner Lendler said after two weeks the flooding did quiet down.

Chair Miller and Commissioner Lendler asked why this footbridge is kept open, and how it could be closed. Dr. Robles said that people use the trails. Scott Gray suggested, but what if it’s not blazed and if the footbridge isn’t usable? Mr. Reddy said that Guilford signed their similar area with “*This is not an approved trail. Do Not Use.*”, and Guilford removed blazes in that location. Commissioner Saunders thought the Blue and Green section nearby would become the trail instead of this Red section. Scott Gray saw two components to a solution: closure and rerouting. Chair Miller asked for a consensus from Commissioners: Do you want to close the trail here? Commissioner Pyskaty was in favor of closing the Red Trail in this section. He added that most of the Interpretive Trail is gone since the 2018 microburst. Commissioners agreed. So Scott will propose to close this old trail portion and to reroute and blaze it. He will draw it. *Ms. O’Hare will get the Interpretive Trail reference deleted from the Trails Map and from the wall display.* It was noted that several Emergency Markers are missing due to the Microburst, etc.

Chair Miller said he will report the comments from Dr. Robles and the audience persons to the Commissioners who were not here tonight.

Chair Miller proceeded with those agenda items that could be noted or discussed without formal action.

5. Contracted work – report (See 6. below.)

Ms. O’Hare noted the report on Trail Assessment at Tyler Mill was received in August from Ferrucci & Walicki. It was not taken up tonight.

6. Unauthorized Trail

a. Water Division memorandum

In June, Ferrucci & Walicki GPS’d a 1.5-mile trail unauthorized here on the east side of Tyler Mill. They analyzed the conditions and reported to the Conservation Commission, Mayor Dickinson, and to Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels. Ms. O’Hare forwarded it to the Water Division. Their memorandum in response to the report and concern for where the unauthorized trail

goes through the Water Division facilities was passed around. They oppose having a trail cross the property. It is designated for water use only. Mr. Ken Roe said he believes this is a right-of-way across to get to the Water Division pipes and it is not Water Company property. *Ms. O'Hare will look into it as perhaps being an easement.*

b. Discussion

In discussion, Mr. Ken Roe added that Tyler Mill Preserve is L.W.C.F.-acquired property, with recreation being the primary use. Ms. O'Hare said different Town properties have different acquisition histories and restrictions. Often, the State of Connecticut places a Conservation Easement on land that was bought with State funds. Mr. Roe said that the area in discussion is one access point to the Preserve. Dr. Robles said that it should be parking there.

Mr. Gray indicated that the Tyler Mill Users Group are going to submit a proposal to keep this trail. Chair Miller said the Commission needs to evaluate this trail on its own merits. He said this is a good example of communicating and about the use. We should not so much increase the total number of miles of trails in Tyler Mill, but to look at what should be there.

Chair Miller continued, So this is more than can be fixed tonight. But we're getting more balanced to get rid of trails that need to be gotten rid of and getting better-designed ones. There may be added trails. I'd want us to agree to work together. I'd ask you to respect the process.

Dr. Robles said he had submitted a proposal to Mr. Michaels for a picnic table to be installed at the closed bridge. Ms. O'Hare said she has not yet seen that proposal. Commissioner Saunders said there are four miles of new trails built without authorization and inquired if the trail building had stopped. Commissioner Saunders said she has not heard back on her proposal to close the White Trail and Orange Trail, which was submitted to Mr. Michaels in March. Mr. Gray said he wants to submit a proposal to continue the closing of the Blue/Black Trail.

Ms. O'Hare suggested there would be a spreadsheet for the trails and proposed changes and progress. Commissioner Lendler suggested to have a procedure for these proposals and progress to move between the Conservation Commission and Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels. Commissioner Saunders suggested also using forms to date and track the progress of projects.

Mr. Reddy stated that the hunting signs are decaying and are hardly readable. Ms. O'Hare passed around the DEEP hunting map for Tyler Mill – Yellow is the hunting area. Mr. Edeen said the hunting map should be posted at the trailhead. Commissioner Saunders said the roads are the boundaries for hunting. For Tamarac Swamp Road, north of it is no hunting. For Tyler Mill Road, west of it is no hunting.

Chair Miller said DEEP designates where the hunting areas are. Commissioner Saunders added, We put the signs up the day before hunting season. DEEP says to put those signs every 100 feet. It's on the online map now.

Chair Miller thanked everyone for their input. He agreed that it's a process. If anybody is operating outside the process, can we encourage them to do it in the process going forward?

Chair Miller said that he will speak with Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels. We're here to help. We need to go forward with common sense and do what is best for the land as well as what people want.

7. Other reports – None.

C. Fresh Meadows

1. Aquatic plants, report – staff

Ms. O'Hare reported this is no longer a concern.

2. Kiosk status – No report.

3. Contracted Work – Ms. O'Hare said, regarding contracted work, that Bob Baker, contractor, cut Japanese knotweed by the streambank at Fresh Meadows, and Todd Mervosh then sprayed chemicals on it. The cuttings were piled to dry by Commissioner Saunders and others. After drying, the cuttings will be taken away. After the knotweed was cut, the mugwort took over. So those areas should be addressed again next spring. Ms. O'Hare recommended continuous mowing of Japanese knotweed. Ms. O'Hare said next spring Todd Mervosh will spray remaining Japanese knotweed that regrows.

4. Other – None.

D. Beseck Meadow

1. Bamboo cutting

Ms. O'Hare sent a memorandum this week to Director of Public Works Rob Baltramatis requesting that this cutting be done by Public Works.

2. Access road erosion & minor dumping

Ms. O'Hare and Commissioner Arsenaault accompanied a contractor to obtain quote from All Habitat Services to treat Trees of Heaven at Beseck Meadow, Cliffside Drive, and two areas on Wisk-Key Wind Road and the cul-de-sac. Also, Commissioner Saunders had met with the contractor in the field at Tyler Mill Preserve for treatment under this quote. Basal bark treatment is best done in autumn. The Commissioners indicated that they agree to having this work done. And Ms. O'Hare will ask for Mayor Dickinson's authorization on each expenditure from the Open Space Resource Management Fund. Note: This particular quote does not ask for cutting, which the Town's tree cutting contractor can do later on. Commissioner Saunders noted care needs to be taken as heart damage has been reported from wood-chipping Trees of Heaven.

E. 1364 Scard Road & 40 Geo. Washington Trail – signage. Not discussed.

F. Ferguson Woods

1. Kiosk proposal – Not discussed.

G. Other properties

Ms. O’Hare noted that the 124 Liney Hall Lane property, bought in August for conservation purposes, has now been marked with open space markers. This approximately five-acre property abuts the 95-acre Stevens property that Wallingford is also buying for conservation purposes.

3. PROPERTY MONITORING REPORTS

A. September monitoring reports – These were tabled to November.

Chair Miller requested that reports be e-mailed to him and reported briefly at the next meeting:

Bertini Park, J. Lathrop

Beseck Meadow, Mike Miller

Tyler Mill Preserve, Dianne Saunders

Cliffside Drive, C. Arsenault

There was no item “B”.

C. October monitoring reports – These, except for Doolittle Park, were tabled to November.

Chair Miller requested that reports be e-mailed to him and reported briefly at the next meeting:

Ferguson Woods, J. Pyskaty

Fresh Meadows, J. Borne

Main Street, Yalesville, B. Sammis

Doolittle Park, staff

Ms. O’Hare reported that the Wharton Brook riparian corridor is growing in with young trees of diverse native species. She showed photos. Ms. O’Hare announced that volunteers are needed to work at the riparian corridor with trees at Doolittle Park.

4. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Memorandum to Town Commissions from Janis Small, Corporation Counsel,

Re: Freedom of Information Act Requirements, dated 5/9/22, was erroneously sent to all Commissioners.

B. Hazard Mitigation Plan Update – South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) – Notification of Survey was received.

Copies of the following correspondence were placed on view:

C. CFPA newsletter, *Rock, Root & Trail* – Sept. 2022 was received.

D. Spotted Lanternfly Packet – forwarded by Southwest Conservation District, Sept. 8, 2022, was received. Ms. O’Hare passed photos and the flyer around.

E. CT Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) – 2022 Symposium, “Strategies for Managing Invasive Plants: Assess, Remove, Replace, and Restore”, VIRTUAL, Nov. 3, 2022, 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m. – Register online (*registration reimbursable*)

- F. Connecticut Farmland Trust**, Gratitude Report, Fall 2022, received 9/13/22
- G. Connecticut Land Conservation Council**, “Featuring CT’s Amazing Land Trusts”, dated Sept. 15, 2022, received 9/15/22
- H. Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Weekly E-News** – received Sept. 6 & Sept. 13 & Sept. 27 & Oct. 4, 2022
- I. Connecticut Urban Forestry Council** – Annual Forest Forum, “Growing Roots in CT’s Forests”, Southington, Oct. 26, 2022 – (*Register online – submit for reimbursement*)
- J. Sustainable CT**, newsletter, “Actions & Impact”, Oct. 3, 2022, received 10/3/22
- K. CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions (CACIWC)** – Annual Conference, Sat., Oct. 29, 2022, Best Western Plus North Haven Hotel, 201 Washington Avenue, No. Haven, CT (*Register online – submit for reimbursement*)

Ms. O’Hare mentioned the Lucite wall display outside her office with conservation information for the community.

5. NEXT MEETING – Nov. 10, 2022

6. ADJOURNMENT

The Commissioners’ consensus was to adjourn, but no formal motion was made. The Commissioners and attendees from the public dispersed at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns, Recording Secretary