

Final / Approved

MINUTES

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, May

12, 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, May 12, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 315 of Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT.

Present: Chair Mike Miller, Vice Chair John Lathrop, and Commissioners Jared McQueen, Dianne Saunders, Dianne Lendler, James Pyskaty, Brad Sammis, Carl Arsenault (arrived at 6:22 p.m.), and Jeffrey Borne (arrived at 6:35 p.m.), and Environmental Planner Erin O’Hare.

Absent: None.

Chair Miller called the Meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting, April 14, 2022

Motion was made by Vice Chair Lathrop to accept the April 14, 2022 Minutes as amended by the correction at p. 5, #6, paragraph 2, to delete “Land Acquisition Committee” and to continue the original name of “Open Space Acquisition Committee”; seconded by Commissioner Pyskaty, and approved by Commissioners Lathrop, Pyskaty, Miller, McQueen, Lendler, and Sammis.

Note: Commissioner Saunders abstained from voting because she had not attended on April 14.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Note: *Ms. O’Hare informed the Commission that work parties can be held without a need for being posted and without minutes being taken. However, for Committee matters involving two or more Commissioners, meeting posting needs to be done and minutes must be done.*

Commissioner Saunders listed the Stewards’ goals for Tyler Mill Preserve: to fix the footbridge that was damaged recently in storms and to elevate the other footbridge that is in the water now. The Stewards reported two areas of corduroy recently installed on the Red South Trail. Also, for property management, a new Steward is coming on board. Plant ecologist Mr. Larry Stowe has made a proposal

to save some trees off-trail in an early successional habitat. Commissioner Saunders accompanied him to an area by the Green Trail where bittersweet vines need to come off maple trees. He would use the protocol from the Nature Conservancy, and Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels would have to approve this work. All Commissioners were in favor of this work being done. *Commissioner Saunders will report this new Steward and this project to Director Michaels.*

2. Bat boxes – installation. No report.
3. Green Trail repair & footbridge – Report at #5, taken up below.
4. Kiosk signage – additional language and map pedestal –See #4, taken up below.
5. Other reports

Chair Miller, Ms. O’Hare, and Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels had met with Mayor Dickinson on May 3. The Mayor indicated that if someone wants to make a trail or a project, that they would have to apply through Parks and Recreation Director Kenny Michaels, who would decide what can be done on Town property, acting as ‘Trails Administrator’ for the Town. He is “to review, evaluate, seek additional information and decide” on applications to the Parks and Recreation Department “for approval, modification and/or denial of proposed improvements and uses.” He will notify pertinent departments and Chair Miller of new proposals for input. Wetlands permitting and other rules would have to be complied with. Director Michaels will send the applications to Ms. O’Hare.

Chair Miller received a copy of a citizen’s proposal to do bridge repair on the Green Trail at Tyler Mill Preserve. Commissioner Saunders said the Green Trail project spans a large drainage swale where animals pass. Also, specified materials and methods should be used.

Commissioner Arsenault joined the meeting at this time. Commissioner Jeff Borne joined the meeting a few minutes later.

Chair Miller asked Commissioners for input on trail-making specifics in this citizen proposal, which will be passed along to Director Kenny Michaels. Chair Miller said the Commission’s review of this proposal for Director Michaels will be on the next agenda.

Commissioner Lendler felt that the location and methods need to be supervised during construction. All Commissioners agreed that they want to have input on projects. Commissioner Arsenault asked if the Town assumes liability for workers on Town property—e.g., Boy Scouts, etc. He pointed out that trees in Tyler Mill cannot be cut for a project. Ms. O’Hare said she believes that this proposal should be revised to reflect this. Chair Miller said the Commission is supposed to look at a proposal and to critique and comment on it and send it back to Kenny Michaels. *Ms. O’Hare stated that this project does need a Wetlands Permit.* A brief discussion was held on the protocols for the “Trails Administrator”. Ms. O’Hare wondered how revisions to proposals will be documented.

4. Kiosk signage – additional language and map pedestal for each main entrance - Northford Road and Maltby Lane

Vice Chair Lathrop is constructing said the kiosk wing will extend out about 3'x 2' with the larger trail map (17" x 21") and associated language inside. *Ms. O'Hare will provide Vice Chair Lathrop with copies of this larger map (with emergency numbers) from the Engineering Department and to the North Farms Volunteer Fire Department as well. Commissioner Lendler said a new map is also needed at the Vietnam Veterans Field entrance. The present kiosk is rotting in spots. Vice Chair Lathrop will assess its condition.*

5. Other reports – Ms. O'Hare said that Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis has a new fencing contractor. Commissioner Arsenault asked for “No parking” signs on the existing gates at Tyler Mill Preserve. *Ms. O'Hare will coordinate with Mr. Baltramaitis on these.*

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Peninsula by southern parking area entrance. No report.
2. Trail stone dust restoration & storm Ida trail bed damage – update. No report.
3. Dogwood tree replacement. No report.
4. Aquatic invasive plant survey, Galko Pond. No report.
5. Other – *In the next fiscal year, Ms. O'Hare will obtain three nursery quotes and purchase the plantings voted in April, and she will get the nurseryman's commitment to install those at Fresh Meadows in September/October 2022.*

C. 205 Main Street open space property

1. Trespass fencing – update

Commissioner Sammis said the chain-link fence has not been installed, and he suggested that a wood post-and-rail fence might be more obtainable. *Ms. O'Hare will follow up. (See also at 3.H.)*

D. Beseck Meadows

1. Bamboo – cutting & private encroachment by bamboo – update
There has been no change.
2. Access road erosion, minor dumping, vegetation by gate
Not discussed.

E. Beseck Mountain

1. Cliffside Drive trail – restrict ATVs – update
Commissioner Arsenault will report in June.
2. Yard waste dumping
Commissioner Arsenault will report in June.

F. Use of FY 21-22 Professional Services – Natural Resources funds

Ms. O'Hare said it is too late to buy additional plantings for installation before June 30. In discussion, Commissioner Arsenault suggested using funds to remove Trees of Heaven and treat TOH roots at the entrance to the Cliffside Drive trail. A tree company or workers with a bucket truck are needed. No action was taken now. (See report at 3.C. below.)

G. Bluebird Nesting Boxes – installations & locations

Ms. O'Hare requested that Commissioners look at their stewarding properties and report good locations for bluebird boxes. Boxes need to be cleaned out in the off-season. Commissioner McQueen recommended Marcus Cooke Park, where four old boxes could be replaced. Other suggestions were for the 205 Main Street Open Space in Yalesville; potentially, the new Stevens property; and Beseck Meadow. Commissioner Saunders recommended the pastures at Fields 4A, 5A, and 19A.

H. Other properties – None.

3. PROPERTY MONITORING – APRIL & JUNE REPORTING

A. Bertini Park – J. Lathrop

Vice Chair Lathrop said going from the Mint Green Trail to the Blue Trail toward the parking lot a big old tree has fallen over the trail. Commissioner Lendler will arrange for a chainsaw, and Vice Chair Lathrop will cut away the fallen portion. The rest of the park is good.

B. Beseck Meadow – M. Miller

Chair Miller reported that Field 20A still has erosion issues going down to the stream and erosion on both sides of the road. The field has not been hayed since last summer, and that was only one haying. Chair Miller will remind the lessee to cut the conservation area and the hedgerow. Ms. O'Hare will remind Department of Public Works about the access road erosion issue.

C. Cliffside Drive – C. Arsenault

There are no signs of ATVs on there now. The trail at the top is good. There are Trees of Heaven invasives by the stream behind the houses, but those are on private properties. In August, Ms. O'Hare and Commissioner Arsenault will look at the Trees of Heaven by the entrance to Cliffside Drive because a contractor may be needed for that.

D. Tyler Mill Preserve – D. Saunders & D. Lendler

Commissioner Saunders reported that Public Works took down and removed some trees inside the Maltby gate. The Commission's consensus was that: 1) Part of the White Trail should be closed and allowed to revegetate; and 2) The Orange Trail along the ridge should be closed to bikers in addition to horses due to dangerous, steep sides on the trail. Chair Miller will submit a request to Director of Parks and Recreation Kenny Michaels as Trails Administrator regarding these two proposals.

E. Wharton Brook at Doolittle Park – staff

Ms. O'Hare had gone there this week. Public Works recently mowed near the brook. In general, Ms. O'Hare will ask them to leave a wider area unmowed next to the brook; and in two areas the mowing was too close to banks, within three feet. Ms. O'Hare requested that a Commissioner could cut down the two Autumn olive bushes.

F. Ferguson Woods – J. Pyskaty

Commissioner Pyskaty saw only minor erosion on the parking area in early spring. He did see some tire marks on the trail. Commissioner Pyskaty will clip some minor growth encroaching on the trails.

Commissioner McQueen left the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

G. Fresh Meadows – J. Borne

Commissioner Borne deferred his report to the next meeting. He will mark on the map the Trees of Heaven that he saw at the top.

H. Main Street, Yalesville – B. Sammis

Commissioner Sammis picked up more trash than usual—two bags full. But he saw no storm damage. Low water is collecting toward the road now. Ms. O’Hare stated that the Owner next door has mowed the Town’s 20-foot corridor by his property again and in the back, too.

4. TRAIL COMMITTEE REPORT, J. Lathrop

Committee Chair Lathrop said he may be doing limited cutting at Bertini Trail. Commissioner Lendler reported that taking care of downed trees/removing storm damage is needed at the Red Trail floodplain. *Ms. O’Hare and Chair Lathrop will see it.*

5. COMMITTEE ROLES

This topic was tabled to the June 9th meeting for all Committees: Trail Committee, Open Space Acquisition Committee, and Farmland Lease Committee.

6. PROJECTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Chair Miller stated he is the “point person” for possible volunteers.

7. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Farmland Lease Committee – Commissioner Saunders, Chair

1. Compliance with lease terms – No report.
2. Conservation management by contractors – No report.

B. Field 1A, No. Branford Rd. – conservation maintenance issue.

Commissioner Saunders will see the cutting work done recently in winter.

Commissioner Lendler left the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

C. Field 1C & 1D, No. Branford Rd. – vehicle trespass issue.

Commissioner Saunders will check these fields.

D. Field 7A, Northford Rd. – hunter parking proposal. No report.

E. Fields 7B, 7C, 7D, off Anderson Rd. – gate.

Commissioner Saunders said this gate is badly needed as there are trespass issues with vehicles.

F. Field 18A, 995C East Center St. – Eversource Transmission Upgrade Project

Commissioner Saunders pointed to the edge of the field along Tamarac Swamp Road where she said that Eversource had leveled it and cut it to the ground. *Ms. O’Hare will ask Eversource to replace the cedar trees with something in there at the road edge now, per Chairman’s request..*

G. Other – No report.

8. OFFICIAL OPEN SPACE MAP – revised keyed to database, staff
No report.

9. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. Property at 3 East Dayton Hill Rd. – report, M. Miller
Chair Miller indicated the acquisition was deferred by the Town Council.

B. Open Space & Water Company Lands Acquisition Grant Application – status, staff
Ms. O’Hare reported that the status of this grant is awaited.

C. Sustainable CT – webinar, Earth Day Coffee Hour, Apr. 22, Dr. Jonathan Foley, ‘Project Drawdown’, climate change & sustainability, (pod cast available May 15) – staff
Ms. O’Hare heartily endorsed this pod cast by Dr. Foley as an excellent presentation to explain climate change. He is saying that 40% of the earth is forests, ocean algae, fields, which function as a carbon sink balancing carbon emission sources, and they need to be preserved. Dr. Foley stated this is an important, doable goal.

D. Open Space Resources Management Fund – account status, staff
This agenda item was not taken up. Discussion turned to possible expenditures for the current Fiscal year. Chair Miller wanted to buy gates. Ms. O’Hare stated the need for fences. Also considered were: Benches for Fresh Meadows and possibly one at Scard Road, with some money left over for more bluebird boxes. Or bat boxes could be installed on 10-15 foot metal poles set into cement with the six-foot boxes on top. A Ferguson Woods kiosk could be installed at Dibble Edge Road. Commissioner Borne suggested hiring Anthony Ziemba to draw a plan to put deer-resistant inkberry shrubs along the path at Fresh Meadows. Commissioner Saunders suggested having Mr. Dennis Quinn write a plan for Fields 7E and 7F. *Commissioner Saunders said she will look at the need for power tools.* Any of these projects would have to be decided by June 9.

E. Sleeping Giant State Park Trail Map – copies. These are available in the office.

F. Sustainable CT newsletter, *Actions & Impact*, May 2, 2022, received 5/2/22

G. CT Butterfly Association, *Newsletter*, Spring 2022

H. CFPA – National Scenic Trail – New England Trail – 2021 Accomplishments / 2022 Goals documents, 4/12/22.

10. NEXT MEETING – June 9, 2022

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Pyskaty to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Sammis, and approved by Commissioners Pyskaty, Sammis, Miller, Lathrop, Saunders, Arsenault, and Borne.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen L. Burns, Recording Secretary