

Final / Approved

MINUTES

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, November 10, 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, November 10, 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 Dianne Lendler, Dianne Saunders, Jeffrey Borne, Brad Sammis, and Environmental Planner Erin O’Hare.

Absent: Commissioners Carl Arsenault, Jared McQueen, and James Pyskaty.

Also present were four persons from the public.

Chair Miller called the Meeting to order 6:10 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 11, 2022

Motion was made by Vice Chair Lathrop to accept the Minutes of August 11, 2022, as presented; Seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved by Commissioners Miller, Lathrop, Lendler, Borne, and Sammis.

Commissioner Saunders abstained because she did not attend in August.

B. September 8, 2022 (cancelled)

C. October 13, 2022 – The Commissioners determined to re-post the October 13, 2022 Minutes as “Unapproved Meeting Notes” due to lack of a quorum at that meeting. No Motion was made.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Saunders said trees are coming down. Stewards Larry Stowe and David Bidell cut Oriental bittersweet and painted the cuts with a chemical on the Green Trail as per the map. Bittersweet treatment is done two years in a row for re-sprouts. Commissioner Lendler said that she assisted on two work parties recently.

2. Response to proposals forwarded by Trails Administrator
Appearing was Mr. Scott Gray of the Tyler Mill Users Group.

- a. Trail blazing system, (S. Gray’s proposal)

Mr. Gray said since September Ms. O'Hare did a review and entered her comments, which were sent to Mr. Michaels and to the Commissioners and to him.

- b. Closure of Red Trail South in floodplain (S. Gray's proposal)
- c. Elimination of 'Piggy-backed Trails', (S. Gray's proposal)

Ms. O'Hare asked if the Commissioners had seen the e-mailed comments she had forwarded to Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels. Scott Gray was to submit a proposed trails map and color scheme and a proposal to change the trail loops and for the piggy-backs.

Mr. Gray noted, My proposal was discussed at this meeting in October, and then I presented it to Mr. Michaels. Also, I am proposing closure of the Red Trail South and eliminating the piggy-backed trails to standardize the areas.

Commissioner Saunders asked, What would blazing materials cost?

Mr. Gray said, My quote is from CFPA (Connecticut Forest & Parks Association), and I can bring it. The proposal is to change the blaze system. I feel the blazing is out of control and needs to be standardized—there are so many trails and no more colors. There are four Yellow trails, two Blue trails, two Purple Trails. We want to put blazing on the Boy Scout Trail as well. Also, trails overlap. So if you go with standard blazing, you wouldn't have to have a different primary color for every trail, just to use the primary and secondary (dual color) system. Also, piggy-backing is one trail with two blazed trails on it, so to eliminate those. With the area and the number of trails, it's hard to manage.

Commissioner Lendler said, I went on a hike where they had plastic signs near the painted ones. Those stand out. They used aluminum nails. It was visible, and their Red Trail showed Blue at the top with Red offset to the right below.

Ms. O'Hare said, We have eight colors today—do you have more than eight colors in mind?

Mr. Gray said, So you offset the colors for signage. If you divide Tyler Mill in half, the primary color could be blue in the north half. North could have a Blue/Orange connected trail. Use solid colors and the side trails have that solid with a subcolor. Right now, there are four Yellow trails.

Mr. Ken Roe said, It sounds great that someone has the idea to make it clearer.

Mr. Gray said, Most of the trail system can stay. I'd address problems, such as when you have one trail with two colors on it. There are numerous confusing trail color names.

Ms. O'Hare said, I understand. Can we see a mock-up?

Mr. Gray said, I wrote it in the proposal. You want to see it on a map?

Chair Miller said, Yes, on a map.

Mr. Gray said, Part I is planning a new blaze system. Part II is changing some of it so the trails are more easily understood. So do you want to do this, go forward?

Commissioner Saunders said, It matters what the map is going to look like. I'd like to see differences in color schemes.

Mr. Gray said, I met with Kenny Michaels last month, and I have 10 more proposals on his desk. Mr. Michaels is happy that someone is looking to do this and trying to make improvements. I started in October last year.

Chair Miller said, Scott, I appreciate that you have the energy and drive to step in and do this.

Commissioner Saunders said, I had only two people lost there in ten years.

Mr. Ken Roe said, I've seen people who are lost, multiple times.

Commissioner Lendler said, The question is, how is our decision going to be made? By a vote of the Conservation Commission?

Mr. Gray asked, Can I have a really big map in black and white? *Chair Miller and Commissioner Lendler will arrange for that.*

Chair Miller asked for the Commissioners' consensus for Scott to go forward. In July we approved the Green Bridge and the Boy Scout Trail. It's really Kenny Michaels' decision.

Vice Chair Lathrop said, Last month there wasn't a quorum. I'd be in favor of clearing up the present system with a quorum here.

As to **a. Trail blazing system:**

Motion was made by Vice Chair Lathrop to have Scott Gray come up with a trails map with a revised color scheme; seconded by Commissioner Lendler.

In discussion, Commissioner Saunders asked if Scott could code the areas for hunting and non-hunting? Also, Commissioner Saunders noted that parallel trails in there are not blazed. She recommended to eliminate parallel trails, such as the Blue Toad Trail that at one point is parallel to the Green Trail. Parallel trails should be eliminated, and piggy-backed trails as well.

The Motion was approved unanimously.

Chair Miller and Commissioner Lendler will obtain two big maps (in black and white) of Tyler Mill Preserve from the Engineering Department for Mr. Gray to use.

As to **c. Elimination of 'Piggy-backed Trails':**

Motion was made by Commissioner Lendler that we eliminate the "Piggy-backed Trails"; seconded by Commissioner Saunders.

There was no discussion. Ms. O'Hare pointed out that the Commission was voting to approve Scott's proposal to remove piggy-backed trails.

Vote: Unanimous in favor of this Motion to eliminate "Piggy-backed Trails".

As to **b. Closure of Red Trail South in floodplain:**

Commissioners noted that this trail portion floods from huge storms, but people love it. The consensus was to maintain it. Seniors go to see wildflowers; families go there. Should it be marked on the map as “Seasonal Trail”, with polka dots or something? People will still use it, even if we remove blazes.

Chair Miller said, I’ve walked it. I understand that people use it, but it’s not well suited for a trail. I’d say that that’s one of the trails that shouldn’t be there.

Commissioner Saunders said, So do we take the emergency numbers off it? People are going to use it. It’s popular, probably one of the most-used trails.

Mr. Gray said, Are there emergency numbers on Tyler Mill Road? There are no emergency markers.

Commissioner Saunders said, But there are numbers on Tamarac Swamp Road.

Mr. Gray said, I think that trail is not maintainable because there’s three or four places that need to have footbridges. Those spots continuously get washed out, and even are under running water. It’s in the riparian corridor where there should not be a maintained trail. I’m recommending to close it, but I described how I would reroute the Red Trail. People who know it can still go there, only we won’t have the responsibility of keeping it maintained. There should not have been a trail next to the river.

Commissioner Saunders agreed.

Vice Chair Lathrop said, But we should leave an emergency marker in there.

Commissioner Lendler said, The stream actually went over the trail. Environmentally, it’s not good.

Motion was made by Vice Chair Lathrop to close the Red Trail South in the floodplain; seconded by Commissioner Borne, and approved unanimously.

In this discussion, Ms. O’Hare suggested marking it as unmaintained. Chair Miller suggested signing for “Trail closed. Unmaintained. Use at your own risk.” Mr. Gray asked how many times people at Tyler Mill use emergency call numbers. Commissioner Lendler said emergency numbers have been in use less than five years, and Chair Miller said there have been fewer than five calls.

Chair Miller noted that the Commission’s consensus is to keep the emergency markers there even though the Red Trail will be closed.

Commissioner Lendler wanted to see better communication between the Commission and Trails Administrator Michaels.

3. Contracted work – Trees of Heaven eradication

Ms. O’Hare reported that All Habitat did four sites in October. They paint the chemical on the tree bark and it dries. *Commissioner Saunders asked Ms. O’Hare to find out if the contractor can determine when the trees are dead so we can drop them.*

4. Unauthorized Trail (on east side) - discussion

Chair Miller asked the Commissioners to walk this area individually and to report back at the next meeting. Commissioner Lendler noted that the Water Division is against this trail.

Mr. Ken Roe said he thought the Water Division has an easement there but that it does not own the parcel.

Ms. O'Hare described the trail: It's about 1½ miles. The Town spent money to GPS it, and the Town spent money to research and evaluate the trail. She agreed the Commissioners should walk it, and a decision should be made on it as a trail.

5. Other reports

Commissioner Saunders reported that she sent contractor Mr. Bob Baker to remove multi-flora rose at Tyler Mill to use up the last few of his contracted hours. Ms. O'Hare said that was appropriate.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Contracted work – Trees of Heaven eradication

Ms. O'Hare said Commissioner Arsenault had mapped out the Trees of Heaven to be eradicated, and All Habitat treated those trees. Ms. O'Hare explained she had given out four small contracts at \$750 or less at four different locations.

2. Proposal for field appreciation document contract

Ms. O'Hare had suggested a small contract for this in May-June. The proposal would be for a booklet describing the fields' various grasses, habitats, and pollinator plants. *Ms. O'Hare will provide more information soon.*

C. Beseck Mountain – Contracted work – Trees of Heaven eradication

This is another location where the contractor eradicated Trees of Heaven. Ms. O'Hare said they did a spot at the cul-de-sac at Wisk-Key Wind Road, and they treated between #45 and #47 Cliffside Drive, known as "Cliffside Trail". Also, they eradicated in the lower portion between #31 and #35 Wisk-Key Wind Road, where Engineering had flagged. However, seven mature Trees of Heaven remain on #31 Wisk-Key Wind Road and 300 saplings remain on #35 Wisk-Key Wind Road. We're not allowed to go on private property, how can we tell those owners? Commissioner Saunders suggested writing to the neighbors about why the Town had done the eradication near their properties. Chair Miller supported that. *Ms. O'Hare will send letters out, with the caution that homeowners should not do the eradication themselves because of the physical dangers of working with Trees of Heaven.* Commissioner Saunders said the CT Agricultural Station may have advice on this.

D. Beseck Meadow

1. Bamboo cutting

Ms. O'Hare had asked Public Works to cut bamboo in here, and she will report back.

2. Access road erosion & minor dumping

Ms. O'Hare had proposed this work to Director of Public Works Mr. Baltramaitis, using an outside contractor. *Ms. O'Hare will obtain scope of work for quotes.*

E. 1364 Scard Road & 40 Geo. Washington Trail – signage

Ms. O'Hare will revisit the signage to see current condition and contact the fabricator for advice.

F. Ferguson Woods

1. Kiosk proposal

Mr. Scott Gray said the CFPA builds kiosks for about \$500 in materials. He will obtain a materials list. That style allows a map to be inserted behind plexiglass and closed up. Mr. William Reddy suggested that Morris Park and Coyle Field need kiosks. Scott Gray asked for one at the Tyler Mill bridge. *Chair Miller asked the Commissioners to discuss this again next month and to bring suggestions of where kiosks are needed.* Volunteers will be asked to help.

2. Signage

Ms. O'Hare said signage is needed at the end of the cul-de-sac at Dibble Edge Road, and the Commissioners endorsed having signage there. Mr. Gray suggested a sign "Hiking Trails" at the cul-de-sac access point, while Ms. O'Hare thought of "To Ferguson Woods Trails".

In response to attendee comments about a dearth of signage on various Open Space properties, Ms. O'Hare said we have met with the Fire Department, Public Works, and the Police Department on proper signage for different properties. Commissioner Borne noted when the Town acquires land and obtains matching funds, the State requires certain signage as well.

G. Agricultural lease properties – signage

Ms. O'Hare said the Lessee Gary Kondracki has suggested that Field 10B needs signage for "No metal detecting." Commissioner Saunders wanted to add: "No digging for historical artifacts" and "No trespassing on agricultural field."

Motion was made by Commissioner Borne that Ms. O'Hare should put together the verbiage for signage for leased Field 10B and other leased areas, consult on it with Town officials, and bring the proposal back to the Commission for the December meeting.

There was no second, and no vote was taken. *Ms. O'Hare said that she will come back to the Commission with a proposal. She will check for any pertinent Police reports on last week's incidents of illegal digging with metal detectors.*

H. Other properties

Ms. O'Hare said that 1242 Whirlwind Hill Road, a private property, is close to the reservoir. Commissioner Lendler affirmed that a mown walking path has been there a long time.

3. PROPERTY MONITORING REPORTS

A. September monitoring reports:

Bertini Park, J. Lathrop – Vice Chair Lathrop submitted his written report. *He will remove the downed tree near the Blue and Green Trails.* Mr. William Reddy said there used to be a stone bench at the drive-in entrance but it's gone.

Beseck Meadow, Mike Miller – Chair Miller reported the bamboo remains, and there is some erosion. The 13.2-acre Conservation Area at the base looks mowed a bit, but he has not heard from the lessee.

Tyler Mill Preserve, Dianne Saunders – Commissioner Saunders submitted her written report. There are so many trails. No planning has been done for unpermitted trails, which then becomes an issue for wildlife, trees, and plants. Chair Miller stated that a Master Plan for the entire trail system is needed.

Cliffside Drive, C. Arsenault – Chair Miller tabled this report until December.

B. October monitoring reports:

Ferguson Woods, J. Pyskaty – Chair Miller tabled this report until December.

Fresh Meadows, J. Borne – Commissioner Borne said Tessa’s Trail has ticks. The catch basin at the end of Cheshire Road needs to be patched with bituminous, and *Ms. O’Hare will tell Public Works*. He also suggested that Public Works should always do field mowing in cycles. Commissioner Borne recommended planting a vegetation buffer by the Phragmites to prevent that from getting into the west side of the pond. Ms. O’Hare noted that the entire canary grass field is wetlands in here. Commissioner Borne suggested a trail connector.

Three persons from the public left the meeting at this time.

Main Street, Yalesville, B. Sammis – Commissioner Sammis reported that the lessee’s field has not been mowed. *Ms. O’Hare will mail Commissioner Sammis another property map with parking access for his use indicated.*

4. OPEN SPACE PLAN

A. Plan update – discussion

Ms. O’Hare asked for Commissioners’ input soon, since she is updating this Plan which was adopted in 1998. There will be more maps in this update and climate resiliency and invasive plants information. Commissioner Borne noted the Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development has open space information as well.

Commissioner Lendler left the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

5. PUBLIC OUTREACH

A. Proposal – consultant-led walk, ‘Climate Resiliency of Our Natural Open Space Lands’

Ms. O’Hare said she especially wants to attract persons age 40 and younger as participants. *Ms. O’Hare will find someone to lead such a walk, as climate resiliency is an important State priority relative to open space.*

Chair Miller requested that Commissioners would hike the unauthorized trail on the east side of Tyler Mill.

6. REPORTS / CORRESPONDENCE

A. DEEP – magazine, ‘Connecticut Wildlife’, July/August 2022; received 10/17/22

B. CT Land Conservation Council, document: ‘2022 Updates & Highlights’, received 11/3/22

C. DEEP Notice Of Tentative Decision Intent to Renew a State Permit For Discharge Into Waters of the State of Connecticut: White Way Laundry, Inc., 271 Hall Ave., proposed renewal of permit to discharge 35,000 gallons of industrial laundry wastewaters to Town sanitary system, dated 10/25/22; received 11/3/22

D. DEEP Energy and Technology Policy, Notice Of Request For Written Comments to inform DEEP in its review of the ‘2023 Conservation & Load Management Plan Update’, dated 11/1/22 to the ‘2022-2024 Conservation and Load Management Plan’; DEEP deadline 11/15/22; per email dated 11/2/22, received 11/3/22

E. Memorandum from Mayor Dickinson, Jr., re: 2023 General Assembly Session – proposals for legislation, due Nov. 18 & Notice of State Legislative Delegation meeting, Dec. 9, 2022, 9 a.m., Robert Parisi Town Council Chambers, Town Hall

- F. CT Energy Efficiency Board & DEEP Public Input Session (virtual)** to be held 11/15/22, 10:00 a.m. – 12 p.m., re: C&LM Plan & Inflation Reduction Act Funding (see above entry)
- G. Sustainable CT – newsletter**, “Actions & Impact”, 11/4/22, 2022; received 11/8/22
- H. Property acquisitions** – updates, staff
Proposed acquisition of the 3 East Dayton Hill property, which abuts Tyler Mill Preserve, was rejected by the Town Council.

7. NEXT MEETING – Dec. 8, 2022

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Borne moved to adjourn the Meeting; seconded by Commissioner Sammis and approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary