

Draft

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, March 9, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

**Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers, Town Hall
45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT**

This Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Conservation Commission was posted to be relocated from Room 315 as scheduled and was held on Thursday, March 9, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers of Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT.

Present: Chair Mike Miller, Vice Chair Brad Sammis, and Commissioners Dianne Saunders, Dianne Lendler, James Pyskaty, and Environmental Planner Erin O’Hare, and Commissioner Jeffrey Borne (arrived at 7:41 p.m.). Commissioner Lendler left the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

Absent: Commissioners Carl Arsenault, John Lathrop, and Jared McQueen.

Also present were four persons from the public.

Chair Miller called the Meeting to order at 6:23 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting, January 12, 2023 – Corrections were made by Commissioner Saunders:

- p. 7, at 2.A.2.b., that the last sentence in the last paragraph in this section should read: “Commissioner Saunders said, There is a training program and reviews with the Risk Manager and the Director of Parks & Recreation, Kenny Michaels.”
- p. 8, at 4.A. in the second paragraph sentence 6 should read: “Commissioner Saunders mentioned climate change, the value of the forest, and safeguarding pollination.”
- p. 8, at 4.A. the first sentence in paragraph 3, should read: “Commissioner Saunders brought up the idea of citizens planting a 10’ x 10’ ‘meadow’ in their front yards by the street, which a study has shown to combat exhaust from vehicles.”

Also, the Commissioners considered the following suggested corrections from Mr. Scott Gray relative to his Trail Change Proposals as follows:

- p.4, at 2.A.2.b., Mr. Gray asked to delete para. 5, which read, “Mr. Gray said, It goes Purple/Yellow. It’s not on the original trails map. You call it the Gold Trail.”
- p. 4, at 2A.2.b. to delete para. 9, which read, “Mr. Gray said, Blue blaze is where it was done onto the Green Trail this summer—one section of 14 feet that got moved to there.”
- p. 5, at 2A.2b. to delete para. 19, which read, “Mr. Gray said, In the north you have a Blue/Orange and a Blue/Red, but they don’t look anything alike.”
- p. 5, at 2A.2.b, to delete the end of sentence 1 “taking these multiple Red/Yellow to pass over two brooks below and building in the double-color trail markers.” So this sentence will read, “Mr. Gray said, It’s the concept that we’re talking about here.”

Motion was made by Commissioner Pyskaty to accept the Minutes of the January 12, 2023 Meeting as corrected; seconded by Commissioner Saunders, and approved unanimously.

B. Regular Meeting, Feb. 9, 2023 (Cancelled)

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

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

Commissioner Saunders noted these two items:

- Mountain laurel shrubs were found with a fungus, which was confirmed by the CT Agricultural Experiment Station as a fungal leaf spot. *The Stewards will follow up to check at bloom time.*

- We verified with contractor All Habitat Services, LLC, that the Trees of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) that were treated in the fall need to go through the 2023 spring-summer growing season to fully uptake the treatment (herbicide). *The Stewards will re-check them, will pull small sprouts, and the trees can then be dropped in the fall/winter.*

2. Hunting map revision

Ms. O'Hare contacted Connecticut DEEP on requested revisions to the DEEP Daily Permit Hunting Map. She described two areas on the Tyler Mill Hunting Map for possible changes: 1) by the soccer field on the north side of Woodhouse Avenue where there is currently no firearms setback. And 2) Ms. O'Hare pointed out the Arabian horse farm off Anderson Road, a private property that is not protected by any setback on the map. The pasture has horses on it. *Ms. O'Hare will confer with Mayor Dickinson, Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels, and the Risk Manager for these two proposed map changes.*

Motion was made by Chair Miller that the Conservation Commission endorses Environmental Planner Erin O'Hare's proposed suggestion for two changes to the Hunting Map at Tyler Mill; seconded by Commissioner Pyskaty, and approved unanimously.

3. Orange Trail signage – status

Ms. O'Hare reported that this sign was made and installed by Rokap. The Orange Trail is now closed to horses and bikers because of the sensitivity of the area.

4. Boy Scout Trail – GPS, markers in field, gate signage

Ms. O'Hare will order a sign now for the farm gate: "No parking in front of gate."

A discussion was held regarding the location of the trail where it passes through the leased farm field. *The Commission's decision tonight was to move the recently installed blaze markers so that the trail runs along the hedgerow, about 15 feet west of the current path which is in the crop area.* Mr. Gray explained the blazes on posts were only temporary. The Commission agreed not to GPS this trail but to wait until all trail changes are done for GPS work.

5. Response to proposals forwarded by Trails Administrator

a. Trail Blazing System proposal – marker type & color roster (S. Gray)

Ms. O'Hare noted that the Commission had already approved the change for colors on piggy-backed trails, but last time the Commissioners had asked to see the entire color scheme before deciding on other color changes. Reference was made to a memorandum on January 6 from Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels to Scott Gray about a new trail blazing system. Mr. Gray explained that discussing color changes proposed for the whole trail system may be overwhelming, so that he would rather approach it trail by trail in sections. *Ms. O'Hare suggested that Mr. Gray should bring a third map on which to keep track of the color changes and re-routes as he and the Commissioners are talking about the locations.* Mr. Gray said he will bring one. Commissioner Saunders said, at the end, the public will get to see one revised map made by the Engineering Department, and then questions will be heard from the public.

b. Map Depicting Proposed Trail System changes (S. Gray)

Several Trail Changes were discussed.

One change proposed is to adopt the double color plastic blazes for marking trails. Mr. Gray suggested there should not be two White Trails, the one in the north and the one in the south. The one in the north should be closed and un-blazed. Commissioner Saunders felt that that work when it's drier, because it's a swamp now. It will be un-blazed through the swamp, and then blazed anew on the northern side of the "Field 9B" by the fence over to the Green Trail which will connect. *Ms. O'Hare will inform the lessee and get the Lease Map revised accordingly by the Engineering Department.* (Kenny Michaels, Trails Administrator, approved this change in December.)

Next, Mr. Gray proposed to eliminate the double-blaze on the "piggy-backed" Red/Yellow Trail. By eliminating the dual colors, the Red Trail will only be Red, and the Yellow Trail will be Yellow. He showed where Red will be taken off the portion of the Yellow Trail.

Mr. Gray wants to eliminate multiple use of the same colors for different trails. Near the main TMP parking lot by Northford Road, Mr. Gray said the very small Purple Trail will become a Blue/Orange blaze, but the long Purple Trail in the south will remain Purple. Ms. O'Hare noted this is the "Lilac Trail" today. Commissioner Saunders would rather not have the color blue introduced in the north as blue is used in the south today.

c. Blue/Black Trail proposal

Rerouting of the Blue/Black Trail was discussed. Damage caused by the (May, 2018) microburst has led to safety and erosion concerns on the steep portion of the existing trail, and it is agreed that this section of the trail should be closed. Mr. Gray's proposed re-routed trail section, currently an unauthorized trail located close to the Muddy River, may need "benching" and "cribbing" to make it safer and to drain better. Mr. Gray handed out pictures of these two trail modification methods. *Commissioners will walk the trail and discuss at the April meeting.*

Chair Miller indicated that implementation overall would occur after all proposed changes are finalized, with the exception of safety concerns.

6. Other reports – None.

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Proposal for field appreciation document contract

Ms. O'Hare said, I have asked Lauren Brown if she wants to do a field appreciation document here.

Regarding mowing, Ms. O'Hare said she hasn't asked Public Works to do it—it has to be done in March over two days—or we could wait until November. *Ms. O'Hare said she and Commissioner Borne will see the field and make a recommendation on mowing schedule with maybe just the north Cheshire side fields to be mowed.* Commissioner Saunders advised checking the field at the glacial erratic and toward the Cuneo house for ground-nesting birds.

Mr. William Reddy said, My house is near Fresh Meadows. I see lights out there, all the time, big over the pond at night. It can't be good for the animals. Commissioner Saunders said that was a Public Works action with skating out there and the liability. No one is skating this winter. *Ms. O'Hare said that she will see about the lighting with Public Works.* Ms. O'Hare had reported to Public Works the drainage problem that comes in from Cheshire Road eroding the trail there near former Cuneo driveway.

Commissioner Borne arrived at 7:41 p.m.

Ms. O'Hare said the bluebird boxes need to be cleaned out. *Chair Miller and Commissioner Borne will do that.*

C. Beseck Meadow

1. Bamboo cutting – private property issue – No report.

2. Access road erosion – status

Ms. O'Hare said she has requested that Public Works Director Rob Baltramaitis would look at this area to determine a scope of repair work for a contractor.

3. Update on adjacent Wallingford Land Trust property

Chair Miller reported that the Wallingford Land Trust recently purchased 3.1 acres adjacent to this Beseck Meadow area. The Trust's question is: Would Wallingford cooperate to put a connection from Powderhill Road through Beseck Meadow to the Land Trust's new area? *Chair Miller asked Vice Chair Sammis to begin a discussion with the Land Trust and report back.*

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

Commissioner Saunders said that Commissioner Lathrop did a temporary sign repair last year. *Ms. O'Hare will reassess the sign's condition and get a quote if needed.*

E. 264 Williams Road property

1. Status & planning – discussion

Chair Miller said this property is now owned by the Town, but it is not yet open to the public. Ms. O'Hare made clear that this property will be under the auspices of the Water Division. No access is allowed until further notice. The State must effect deed restrictions, and the Water Division will head up plans for the site.

2. Bluebird boxes

Chair Miller suggested we install bluebird boxes, but it probably will be too late for nesting this season. Ms. O’Hare would like the Commission to seek a multi-habitat ecological assessment of the 95 acres. Commissioner Borne said he would like to see stepstones across the river.

F. Other properties

Commissioner Borne had seen the Hartford Turnpike Open Space, and he asked to have a fence to define that boundary with the property owner next door. Ms. O’Hare said an interdepartmental meeting had decided that a fence should be put up. *Vice Chair Sammis and Chair Miller will see this property again. Ms. O’Hare will forward Chair Miller a map of this site, Field 14A, 205 Main Street.*

3. PROPOSED TRAILS WORK GROUP – discussion

The Trails Work Group was discussed. This is a new trail construction and maintenance group recently formed by the Mayor with input from Ms. O’Hare, Mike Miller, Scott Gray, and Parks and Recreation Director/Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels. Ms. O’Hare passed around a copy of the Mayor’s memorandum, dated February 22, 2023, in this regard. *Chair Miller requested that the Commission’s present Trails Committee remain and take on an advisory role as opposed to active trail work, and the Commission agreed.*

4. PROPERTY MONITORING REPORTS

A. Cliffside Trail/Beseck Mountain – C. Arsenault. This item was tabled.

5. POTENTIAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION – request for review

Chair Miller said he will ask the Commissioners to walk out there later in the spring.

6. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Field 2A, 75 North Branford Road – trespass damage

Commissioner Saunders reported on a big trespass by trucks which have left ruts in this Farmland Lease field. A truck went in and got stuck had to be pulled out. Commissioner Saunders said the farmer will have to go in and fix the ruts. Ms. O’Hare has spoken to the Lessee. Ms. O’Hare said she had requested Public Works to straighten the property sign.

Commissioner Lendler left the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

7. PUBLIC EVENTS

A. Quinnipiac University ‘Big Event’ – proposals

Commissioner Borne said the students could establish a trail along Lucky Pond on the Galko property, and he described it. Chair Miller said a proposal for it would have to be made to Trails Administrator Kenny Michaels. Commissioner Saunders suggested that at Ferguson Woods she would assist students to clean up Japanese knotweed and bring the tarps out. Commissioner Borne suggested that students could install plantings at Fresh Meadows. Commissioner Saunders suggested putting the hedgerow back at the Boy Scout Trail—clippers, gloves, rakes and tarps needed. *Chair Miller will respond to the University representative.*

B. Hike proposal

Chair Miller suggested having a family nature walk at Fresh Meadows or Ferguson Woods (done before) or at Tyler Mill Preserve. Commissioner Saunders suggested doing that on “Open Space Day,” which was popular before. *Dates to e discussed next month.*

C. Other proposals – None.

8. REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE

A. CT Farmland Trust – email notices, several

B. CT Land Conservation Council – Conference, Sat., March 25, 2023, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Interested Commissioners should register online for this conference by the Connecticut Land Conservation Council at Wesleyan University and submit for reimbursement to Ms. O’Hare.

9. NEXT MEETING – April 13, 2023

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Burns
Recording Secretary