



APPROVED MINUTES
Ridgefield Conservation Commission
Town Hall annex, 66 Prospect Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
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April 5, 2021 at 7 P.M.
Via ZOOM

Present: Jim Coyle Allan Welby Erik Keller
 Jean Linville Jim Liptack Dave Cronin
 Kitsey Snow Jack Kace Daniel Levine

Mr. Coyle chaired the meeting. Ms. Campbell-Gibson took the minutes.

ADD AGENDA ITEM

UPON carried, it was **RESOLVED** to add a discussion of Sustainable CT to the agenda as item 5.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Levine), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of March 22, 2021 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall.

2. OPEN SPACE

Bennett's Farm Rd – Invasive species

A resident has contacted the conservation office to request the removal of invasive vines apparently wrapped around and killing trees in the open space next to No 227 Bennett's Farm Rd. The question posed by chairman, Mr. Coyle, is: does the commission want to undertake this project given scope of such a project and the limited resources and funds available? Mr. Keller suggested asking the BOS for resources and funding. Mr. Cronin and Mr. Levine both weighed in saying that the commission should clear vines that kill open space trees. Mr. Keller's concern is that the vines grow back easily and stronger after being cut and that setting a precedent by taking care of vines on trees on an ad hoc basis could consume all the energy and resources of the commission to this kind of maintenance.

The commissioners all agreed that the priority for open space maintenance was the clearing of fallen and dangerous trees from the hiking trails. The clearing of vines from trees is currently beyond the scope of routine maintenance activities undertaken by the commission.

Mar-Joy Pond/Casey Lane – new trail

Mr. Cronin has not contacted the owner of the property at Mar-Joy Pond open space where the private trail was created to join an open space trail. He will get her phone number and call during the week.

Tanglewood Court

A letter of probable violation was sent to the owner of 25 Tanglewood Ct. Mr. Coyle, Dr. Kace, and Mr. Cronin will meet with the owner to discuss the probable violation on Tuesday April 6 at 3p.m.

Hessian Drive – Parcel D10-0018

Though a meeting for a site walk was to be set for April 1 at 10 am, this was cancelled due to rain. Over the weekend, the commissioners went to the site on their own and the consensus is the site is full of various invasive species of plants, is waterlogged and could not be used to add a trail. Dr. Kace suggested using the criteria used to decide on conservation easements and the criteria used in the OSWA grant proposal to purchase the Bear Mountain property. Using those criteria, parcel D10-0018 does not appear to fit the criteria for purchasing land for open space use.

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the commission not purchase the property and a suggestion made to the owner to consider donating the land for tax write-off purposes.

Summer Workers

Ms. Campbell-Gibson reports there have been 7 applicants for the summer worker positions. The application period closes on April 19, 2021, after which candidates can be selected for interview.

3. COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP – NEW MEMBER

The available position on the commission has been advertised. One application has been received. Dr. Kace said the new candidate should ideally have a legal background.

4. POCD

Mr. Keller will be attending an update meeting of the POCD committee in early May. The commission has four action items on which to report:

- (1) Explore ways to add trails to bring hikers to Great Swamp – the Town/NRWA Ligi's Way Boardwalk is addressing this need.
- (2) What is the action plan to purchase more open space – Mr. Keller and Mr. Coyle have been working on identifying potential Town land to purchase or to gain by conservation easement deed restrictions to add to the open space inventory. Ms. Snow mentioned a project underway by the Hudson to Housatonic Initiative (H2H) identifying land to earmark for purchase to add to open space corridors.
- (3) Integrate Open Space inventory to the Town GIS – Mr. Cronin has been trying to do this for years with little success. He has had no feedback on requests to fix errors and properly mark open space parcels. The commission has thorough listings of open space parcels, readily available to give to whomever will be updating the GIS for the town.
- (4) Undertake a program to minimize fertilizer use – Dr. Linville suggests putting signs near water addressing runoff issues and how this affects water quality, as well as creating a flyer for people to read.

Dr. Kace noted that the commission has been put in charge of items without being given a scope or explanation of exactly what outcomes are required.

5. SUSTAINABLE CT

Mr. Coyle said the town has a bronze rating for sustainability. Dr. Ben Oko is working with RACE on pushing the Conservation Commission to contribute to The Sustainable CT project. Mr. Coyle said the Tree Committee should undertake the Forestry Management Plan. Open Space Inventory management relates to the POCD and Sustainable CT. The Natural Resource Inventory was updated ten years ago and needs updating again. Dr. Oko has volunteered to assist with updating the NRI. The commission needs to assess what updates are needed. Mr. Coyle asked for volunteers from the commission to work on the plan with Mr. Oko.

Dr. Linville asked what the first step would be. Mr. Coyle suggested everyone read through the NRI and highlight areas they think would need to be revisited and to determine if field work is required. He added

that Sustainable CT may have staff available for this project. Ms. Linville requested a copy of the NRI. A copy is in the office for her.

Mr. Cronin suggested updating the information on water quality, as well as trees in the area and understory information. Mr. Coyle added that to be scientific the same areas studied ten years ago would need to be reexamined for changes to be noted. Dr. Kace suggested doing a manageable 5-10% sampling of field work to get an idea of changes. Mr. Levine informed the commission that Trumbull updated their NRI last year. He will source the minutes from those meetings and send these to everyone for additional information.

Mr. Cronin and Dr. Linville will work with Dr. Oko on the project.

6. PUBLIC OUTREACH

Mr. Levine asked the commissioners to continue to look for and send him ideas for social media posts. He is collecting articles for the next newsletter. Mr. Keller said he had something he would like to submit. Mr. Coyle said the Catalog of Open Spaces is in the process of being updated on the website and suggested using some of that material for the newsletter and/or advertising open spaces on a regular basis.

7. MEETING ATTENDANCE

No issues were reported with the required meeting attendance.

No feedback on meetings attended.

8. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mr. Coyle reported that the budget has been reworked and the deficit is down to \$500 for the year now after paying the town back for the expenses incurred at the pollinator garden with money from the Discretionary Fund.

Cheryl Cook, the member for the Conservation Commission on the Tree Committee has indicated she will be resigning her position. A new advertisement for the tree committee vacancy will be published in the press, on social media, and at Town Hall.

On Wednesday April 7, 2021 the BOS will be deliberating on the two leases up for renewal at McKeon Farm as well as approving Jim Liptack as a full member of the Conservation Commission. Both Mr. Coyle and Mr. Liptack will attend this BOS meeting.

Mr. Cronin asked the commissioners if they would start posting the open spaces assigned to them now that the weather is warmer. There are nails and signs for posting in the office.

The next RCC meeting will be held on **Monday** April 19, 2021 at 7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Liptack), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:25 P.M.