Call to Order
Present: Tom Harbinson, Chairman
            Ed McCreery, Commissioner
            Sherri Dutkanicz, Commissioner
            Jim Tate, Commissioner
            Joe Welsh, Commissioner
            Jim Goodman, Commissioner

            Also
            Present: Teresa Gallagher, Conservation Agent
            Marianne Chaya, Clerk
            Terry Gallagher, Trails Committee

A. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance
Chairman Harbinson called the meeting of the Conservation Commission to order at 7:05 p.m. All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
B. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Dutkanicz MOVED to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2011 Regular meeting. SECONDed by Commissioner Welsh. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

C. Public Portion (items not on agenda)

None

D. Shelton Lakes Recreation Path, upgrade to handicapped-accessible standards. Status

Chairman Harbinson reported that the City was awarded the grant from the Iroquois Pipeline in the amount of $14,710. This money will be used on the Rec Path.

E. Trails Committee Report

Trails Committee member, Terry Gallagher reported that the Trails Committee members had a work party this month on Oak Valley Rd, where we flagged a couple of different routes for a walking trail. We still have to confirm if we need to get the wetlands flagged by a certified soil scientist and surveyed. There are a couple of places where the property corners need to be pinned. The Commissioners can go out there and get a feel for where you want the trail to be in relations to the wetlands.

Parks & Rec went out there last week and put down road sand and dirt by the gate. The millings are down and in place by the Great Ledge property. There is a guided hike scheduled for Sunday, January 21st at 2 P.M at Nicholdale. We will have a work party on January 14th @ 8:30 A.M. to get it ready for the hike. We probably will have a guided hike in February; tentatively looking at the Nells loop trail off of the Abbey Wright parking area.

Sherri Dutkanicz has done a nice job on a notice with the CFPA regarding our participation on National Trails Day (June 2).

Richard Skudlarek is updating the spread sheet on the volunteer hours for 2011. We anticipate it showing over 1000 hours, close to 2000. We will have a summary of our work efforts in 2011 and will show what we are going to work on in 2012. Chairman Harbinson asked to have this information available when he does the budget presentation.

Terry Gallagher reported that Sherri Dutkanicz has submitted her expenses for Shelton Day.

Terry also reported that most of the equipment has been winterized. The field mower does need some maintenance this winter.

Terry Gallagher said that now that the Rec Path is substantially built out, there are going to be some maintenance items that will come up every year. As of now we know that there are rails in various areas that will need replacing. We are
requesting that the Commission consider having a separate line item in the budget for Recreation Path maintenance in the range of $5000.

Chairman Harbinson said that this might be covered under Land Improvements. Terry Gallagher said he’d like to have its own line item to measure work done just for the Rec Path. This is somewhat different from other trails and open space. I think it would be good to track it as its own separate animal. I can see down the road that there could be some capital improvement items such as decking and timber bridges. This is not just some trail in the woods; it’s a major greenway project.

Terry mentioned that we are getting good turnout of people, especially residents along the new sections of the Rec Path. We’ve also gotten a lot of nice feedback from the neighbors. The dog park also has been well used. I think it also says a lot about the Rec Path when you have businesses volunteering to work on the Rec Path, such as Perkin Elmer, and getting awarded a grant from the Iroquois Pipeline. It’s seen as a positive thing from both the business and residential community.

Agent Gallagher said she passes the Rec Path crossing at Wesley Drive almost every day and I see someone on the Rec Path.

Chairman Harbinson also said he has received comments from many residents who utilize the Rec Path for biking.

**F. CT Community Farms Preservation Program**

Chairman Harbinson reported that the Dept. of Agriculture has a pilot program for community farm preservation. They have an allocation of $2M. This is basically a program for pocket farms (around 10 acres). The parcel located at 279 Soundview Ave would have been a candidate for this.

This program has 6 criteria items to have in place to be pre-qualified for participating in this pilot program.

1. Recognized farmland preservation and a plan of conservation & development.
2. Establish an agricultural commission and/or program for farmland preservation.
3. Inventory of local farmland resources.
4. Prioritize farms for preservation using a criteria scoring or ranking system.
5. Designated fund for farmland preservation and have a method of funding.
6. Request identification of locally important farmland soils to the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

The Commissioners talked about each criterion and whether we already meet them and if not, how it could be done.

The question is, is there a community farm of a small size that we would want to participate. Chairman Harbinson asked if anyone knew if there are any farmland owners interested in preserving their farm. They determined they’d have to ask around.
Chairman Harbinson said that even if we didn’t participate in the program it would be good to request from the USDA the identification of our locally important farmland soils. Agent Gallagher said that we have that information online. We used it when we were looking for a spot for our community garden.
Agent Gallagher said she believes there is a state statute that allows towns to form agricultural commissions. Chairman Harbinson asked her to check to see if the Conservation Commission was rephrased to encompass the duties of an agricultural commission.

G. Open Space Trust Account. Status
No report.

H. Budget Status
Chairman Harbinson reported that the budget for 2012-2013 has to be submitted to Finance by January 20th. I emailed each Commissioner what I have so far in terms of goals, activities, position schedule and capital outlay requests. I basically kept the line items the same.
The only suggested change is what Terry Gallagher requested for a separate line item for Rec Path maintenance for documentation and delineation of the activity. Trails thinks that this will be an expense that needs to be managed on its own. Commissioner Tate said that it’s a line item within our account. Maybe we just need it as a delineation of a line item.
The budget this current year is only $40 more than 2006/07. They did reduce our budget in the past year and this current year is $8000 over the previous year. Agent Gallagher’s salary had to be adjusted due to the increase in her work load for her participation in the community garden, litter, and clean sweep.
Chairman Harbinson and Agent Gallagher talked about the Community Garden line item.
There is an aspect in the budget that asks for capital expenditures. Commissioner Tate suggested adding about $50K for a new storage facility. In the past we had $50K a year allocated and we ended up spending about that much on the Rec Path.
The Commissioners talked about the potential costs of finishing the Rec Path and other expenses this year.
Chairman Harbinson talked about what he presents to the Board in relation to the grants and volunteer labor. He also talked about the equipment and the care from the Trails Committee members.
The Commissioners discussed use of the property at Nells Rock Rd. for a storage facility. They concluded that we should ask for $100K over 2 years.
The line item for the stenographer had to be increased because Marianne now does the minutes for the Trails Committee.

**Commissioner Tate MOVED to request $48,512 as a budget request for the Conservation Commission, which is an increase of $1000 (2%) from last**
I. Open Space set-aside. Status of increase to 15% in subdivision regulations
No report.

J. Review of PZC or IWC Applications for Subdivisions and/or Developments

1. Old Applications/Monitor/Follow-up
None

2. New Applications (Applications received between agenda creation and our Regular Meeting may be amended to this Agenda at start of regular meetings by a vote from the Commission.)
None

K. Communications
None

L. Quality of Life – Executive Session (land acquisition and security issues)
Commissioner Goodman MOVED to go into Executive Session at 7:45 P.M. for the purposes of discussing possible land acquisitions and potential farmland grant program. SECONDED by Commissioner Dutkanicz.

At 8:20 P.M. the Commissioners returned to regular session.

Chairman Harbinson stated that there were no motions made in Executive Session. We did discuss some potential land acquisition parcels and Chairman Harbinson will talk to the Mayor about them.

M. Comments by members
Chairman Harbinson talked about revaluation and how it is affecting his properties in Derby. One of the properties has an easement. This may affect properties in Shelton that have conservation easements. They should be fully mapped and documented. This may have a benefit if it's documented.
N. Adjournment
The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.
The next regular meeting is Wednesday, February 1, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Chaya
Clerk, Conservation Commission