

CITY OF SHELTON
 CONSERVATION COMMISSION
 Minutes for the Regular Meeting on Wednesday, June 26, 2013 at 7:00 P.M.
 Minutes should be considered a draft version until approved by CC at their next meeting.

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Call to Order

Present: Tom Harbinson, Chairman
 Bill Dyer, Vice-Chairman
 Jim Tate, Commissioner
 Ed McCreery, Commissioner (arrived at 7:30 PM)

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 7:10 p.m. All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Approval of Minutes

There was not a quorum present. No motion made.

C. Public Portion (items not on agenda)

Chairman Harbinson stated that we have a member of the public tonight and I spoke with him before the meeting started. He has concerns regarding the viewshed along the Housatonic River, primarily near our Southbank park, whether

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some of the high cliff areas would be protected. I informed him that the lots that are off of Nature Lane do have a conservation easement on the frontage that comes down to Route 110.

Joe Nechasek, 25 Waterford Lane

Mr. Nechasek said that he was so upset when he saw the damage from the blasting done off of Route 110 across from the golf center. That led to my concern about protection of other bluff areas. I didn't know if this would be something to bring to this Commission, but I knew Tom and wanted to express my feelings.

Chairman Harbinson stated that the property that is being developed did not come across this Commission for review. Obviously there have been some mis-steps with what has happened with the earth/gravel/rock removal.

Mr. Nechasek commented that the most attractive stretch of the view of the river is between Murphy's Lane and Constitution Blvd.

Chairman Harbinson briefly talked about what had happened years ago when the developer cut down trees on the river side of Route 110 when he was constructing the River Run condos.

Commissioner Tate suggested having Rick Schultz forward any applications to our Commission that would take place along the river for our comment.

D. Trails Committee Report

Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that in June we had 2 work parties, resulting in significant improvements to the Paugussett extension. There was some emergency trail mowing and tree removal from the Rec Path.

Commissioner Tate asked if all the trails are passable. Vice-Chairman Dyer said yes, they are.

Commissioner Tate asked about who does maintenance on the Rec Path. Does Parks & Rec do it? Vice-Chairman Dyer answered that they don't have a mowing schedule and they do not do maintenance on a routine basis. There have been times they have done work on the path. Other trails that cross the power lines have to get mowed, but they are not on the Rec Path. The Lane Street meadow needs to be done periodically.

Vice-Chairman Dyer stated that he has been told that the Rec Path is not the responsibility of Parks & Rec.

Agent Gallagher said that at this time of year the Parks & Rec staff is stretched very thin.

Commissioner Tate said that since our budget is the one that is supporting the Rec Path maintenance, we need to make sure our budget is adequate to service the trails.

Chairman Harbinson said that so far it has supported the maintenance costs because we are using volunteer labor.

Vice-Chairman Dyer said that we did buy the mower and the Gator.

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Commissioner Tate pointed out that if the trails are compromised in any way for use by the City, because it is not adequately funded for maintenance, then we should know that.

Terry Gallagher, Trails Committee, said that for instance, we had a big multiple tree come down on the Rec Path by the intermediate school. Three of us went out on Sunday morning and cleared it out so no one would get hurt. If you had to pay a tree crew to come out on a Sunday it would be costly. All you had to pay for was the chainsaw oil and gas.

Commissioner Tate and Chairman Harbinson expressed the concern that we don't short-change ourselves for the future.

There was discussion of the labor hours spent and it was noted that those hours are documented.

They said that in the long run there would most likely be expenses associated with the maintenance of the Rec Path.

Agent Gallagher said that the trails volunteers are so busy this time of year with all the new growth all at once. The Rec Path seems to get the priority.

Chairman Harbinson noted that this is something to consider for future open space purchases and what would go into creating a trail. The potential for more trails just will mean that the trails volunteers will be spread even thinner than you are now. The answers to that would be to have some professional staff involvement with their budget and equipment or to expand the volunteer base. You have made great efforts in that respect, with guided hikes and a nice social atmosphere of working on a trail committee.

Terry Gallagher said that from May to July it would be nice if we could work out a deal where Parks & Rec could swing by and mow Lane Street when they are in the area. Maybe we should consider even hiring a landscaper.

Agent Gallagher pointed out that the trails committee got set back with the hurricane cleanup.

Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that we will have a bike ride on July 20 on the Rec Path. It will start in Huntington center, go down the Rec Path, come back and maybe go to the Huntington Café. The time is to be determined.

There are two work parties scheduled – July 13 @ Abbey Wright and July 27 @ the Rec Path at Silent Waters. Two of our members are getting married overlooking Silent Waters on August 3.

Agent Gallagher said there is going to be a wedding at Eklund Garden on July 11.

The Eagle Scout project for the Paugusset trail from John Dominick to Buddington has been completed.

The Eagle Scout project at Abbey Wright is under construction.

There are two Scouts doing projects on the Paugusset trail near Independence Dr.

We also have a Scout doing the Nells Rock loop small bridge and trail repair.

There is another Scout who will be creating a trail to the fishing area near Pine Tree Hill Rd.

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Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that he met with the Mayor regarding the situation on Mayflower Lane. We went out to the site and discussed the idea of bringing the Paugusset trail up from behind Sinsabaugh on to the cul-de-sac, then walking up Mayflower and crossing Meadow St. to the Wiacek property. The Trails Committee agreed that this would be a practical solution to get the trail built now. We are leaving it open to re-examine it at a later date. We sort of have an agreement, passive at least, with a vast majority of the neighbors to allow a trail to walk up their street. This is not necessarily an "approval" of the neighbors, but would say it's more of an endorsement.

Chairman Harbinson stated that at the end of the cul-de-sac is where we had it surveyed and we found that the property owner had their driveway, a play structure, some ornamentation of landscaping on city property. We were going to have it monumented and perhaps some type of fencing or screen on the property line.

Vice-Chairman Dyer said that the Mayor first recommended arborvitaes but after learning of the cost and the fact that they can be deer food.

Vice-Chairman Dyer showed the photo of the split-rail fence constructed in 2007 at Lane St. extension. We wanted it delineated because they were dumping on to open space. He showed the photo of what it looked like in 2012 and how it's an ideal situation. It minimizes the conflict and provides a screening for privacy and has a rustic look. If the fence falls down years later it won't matter because the vegetation provides the screening. There are no maintenance issues.

The photo was presented to the Commissioners of where the fencing should be constructed. The Mayor has agreed to a 2-rail split-rail fence.

Discussion of the location.

The Trails Committee made a motion to construct the fence per the line drawn on the photo.

Vice-Chairman Dyer reported that someone is dumping grass clipping right next to the sign where Agent Gallagher erected. She also set certified letters requesting they stop dumping. The trail blaze has twice been removed by a homeowner.

The Mayor said he would go to the neighbors with the drawing to show them what we are going to do.

The Trails Committee voted for the one shown but it was a 3-2 vote. The 2 that didn't vote for it wanted it along the property line.

The Commissioners examined their options.

Commissioner Tate MOVED to have a 2-rail split-rail fence constructed at the end of the Mayflower Lane cul-de-sac by Parks & Rec. The fencing will be aligned as per the consensus of the Mayor, the Trails Committee and the current mapping of the orange blazed line as shown on the photo exhibit. SECONDED by Chairman Harbinson.

Discussion:

Chairman Harbinson said that we are not giving them property but giving them the impression of privacy or where the private property starts, that is not the true

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public boundary. Is there any restriction to the use of the Paugusset trail that people would come to the end and feel inhibited like they were on someone's private property? Is there any of that type of feeling of restriction with where the fence will be?

Vice-Chairman Dyer said he didn't think so. He thinks that with the design was such that they could actually extend a road down to go behind Sinsabaugh. He showed where he thought about a second fence.

Commissioner Tate said that we should consider more fencing maybe at a later time.

Chairman Harbinson asked Agent Gallagher if this fence would provide a better medium for a blaze. She said no, it needs to be on a tree (eye level).

A voice vote was taken; all were in favor; MOTION PASSED.

Chairman Harbinson asked Vice-Chairman Dyer to convey the Commission's appreciation for the Trails Committee members and their input.

Tape 1, Side B

E. Open Space Trust Account Status

No report

F. Budget – 2013/2014 FY

It is not known if the requested transfers were done by the Board of A&T. The minutes are not posted online.

Our end of year budget shows that we will end with a balance of \$2490. We utilized our budget efficiently and effectively.

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

1. Old Applications/Monitor/Follow-up

- i. PZC 13-5 Hawks Ridge, Long Hill Cross Road/Beard Sawmill Rd, PDD zone change from Light Industrial for 140 residential units

No new update

2. New Applications

None

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H. Communications (sent or received)

- Chairman Harbinson had asked Agent Gallagher to have the Mayor sign a letter asking for identification of farmland soils of local importance to the USDA. There are some grants that will be coming available in subsequent years and that will allow us to get some ranking points when we are applying for grants. This is a free analysis.
- The BOA approved acquiring a piece of property on Yutaka Trail.
- Agent Gallagher showed the letter regarding the request for a sidewalk in Huntington Center she sent in October 2011 to the Street Committee, Rick Schultz and John Anglace. This was discussed last meeting and the Commission asked Agent Gallagher to check to see if we sent a letter.

I. Quality of Life – Executive Session (land acquisition and security issues)

None

J. Comments By Members

None

K. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 P.M.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, August 7, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Chaya
Clerk, Conservation Commission