

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT
MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 9, 2009**

1. Call to Order

A. Attendance - Seat alternate member, if necessary. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Present were: Lois Query, (Vice-Chair), Richard Symonds, Cynthia MacDonald, and Don DiGenova. Eugene Koss arrived at 7:45 P.M. Andrew Holl arrived at 8:09 P.M. Others present were: Linda Farmer, Director of Planning and Community Development. Not in attendance: Phil Moreschi (Chair).

Agenda items added:

3C. Meeting Procedures:

4B. Approve minutes of the May 14, 2009 meeting

B. Public Comment. – None

2. Boy Scout Project – Invasive Plants - None

3. New Business

A. Update from Linda Farmer – Regarding the Knofla property – Amy Patterson from the Trust for Public Land was working with the family to plan a celebration of the Town taking ownership of the property but the family declined.

Further discussion included the following: The maintenance of the 15 acre parcel on Sugar Hill Road was discussed and Ms. MacDonald suggested that someone be found to mow the property who would also like to make a donation to the Conservation Fund. Ms. Farmer added that there is some additional open space/acreage and that a list should be made. Mr. Symonds added that indeed there are properties that the Conservation Commission should and shouldn't oversee. As an example he added that the oversight of Sage Meadow isn't clear and that if the Commission was going to have a property then it should have oversight and conservation plans for it. Currently, Joshua Trust is overseeing the Sage Meadow property. Ms. Farmer added that another property that was in limbo was Campbell. Ms. Query commented that she would like to revisit the Sage Meadow property and that the Commission had not voted on this issue.

Mr. Symonds added that the Commission should go through the list of properties with which it is involved and if there is a question as to whose purview it comes under that a ruling should be made to determine the jurisdiction. He sees the commission as having two roles: management of properties and to help ensure the preservation of open space.

Ms. Query added that the Commission should write a letter to Joshua Trust regarding the Sage Meadow conservation easement – Joshua Trust owns this easement hence preventing the town from doing as it wishes with the land. She would like to know what is on the easement and put this as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Further discussion took place regarding the roles Joshua Trust has and with which properties. Mr. Koss suggested that indeed the Commission should do its research and that a dialogue would be productive. Mr. Symonds agreed and stated that the Commission should have Joshua Trust in on a joint meeting to discover its objectives etc. Ms. Query added that when the property was walked it was determined that the property be for education, have limited access and improve the aesthetics of the town. Mr. DiGenova added that a building lot had been purchased for the purposes of having access to parking for this property. Ms. Query would like to add this topic to the agenda for the next meeting and include the background of how the decisions on this parcel had come about.

- B. Green Grant – Ms. Farmer explained that the \$1000 grant has been received from Hamilton Standard and it can be drawn off of over time. Ms. Farmer attested that this was a charitable donation and that no service had been provided. She asked the Commission how it would like to administer the account. Ms. Query explained that one of the duties of the head steward of a property was to determine what is needed and then present a list to the Commission. Ms. MacDonald added that Mr. Ken Hankinson is putting together a “needs” list. Mr. Symonds inquired as to whether the Commission had written a “thank you” note for the grant and suggested that something be drafted, and addressed to Cynthia Forbes, Communications. It would be sent along by the Chair Phil Moreschi. Further the Chair should also send a letter to acknowledge the person who discovered and made inquiry for the grant. This motion was made by Mr. Symonds and seconded by Mr. Koss. Ms. MacDonald offered to formalize the letter to Cynthia Forbes.

Ms. MacDonald inquired as to whether the group had received the email regarding available lumber. Ms. Query commented that she had a large railroad freight car now available so that items that needed dry storage could be brought there. Mr. Symonds added that this offer was too good to pass up and offered to call Gene Lundman. Ms. Koss added that indeed the lumber would be used.

- C. Meeting Procedures - Mr. Symonds presented a number of issues. He asked Ms. Farmer if there was a reason for the specific agenda (for example the “seat alternate members” inclusion, the location of the minutes’ approval and why New Business is listed before Old Business) provided to the Commission. He would like to see the agenda more in line with the meeting. Further Mr. Symonds inquired as to whether the Conservation Meeting start time is fixed at 7:00 P.M. or if it should be changed to a later time. Ms. MacDonald stated that the agenda is guest-friendly so that the public does not need to be present for the entire meeting. Ms. Query commented that this was a good item for the workshop and requested Mr. Symonds to put together a proposal for consideration. Mr. Koss added that a mechanism should be created to inform Cindy Murdock of the specifics of the agenda and that the agenda should be visitor friendly yet still agile. He would like to see added: “Additional Agenda Items” or “Adjustment to the Agenda”.

4. Business Meeting

- A. Approve minutes of June 11, 2009 – Ms. Query would like to see a non-attendance list included in the minutes. Mr. Koss would like to add additional information on geocaching. First, the activity needs to be monitored. Second, by definition, geocaching means leaving something behind. The issue is what is being left behind and how the activity is being conducted. Hobbyists may not leave random items – requesting permission to conduct this activity is a common courtesy. Ms. MacDonald added that the Commission has a “take out what you take in” policy in the management plans. Mr. Koss added that something is needed to state that a request for permission to perform the activity must be submitted and that the request will be reviewed. Further, with more frequent use of the properties overseen by the Commission that it has the responsibility to review the management of the plans. Lastly, Ms. MacDonald noted a spelling correction to be made on Page 1 where in the third to the last line Weigold is misspelled as Weingold.
- B. Approve minutes of May 14, 2009 – Mr. Symonds motioned that the minutes be accepted. This was seconded by Mr. Holl and all were in favor.

5. Old Business

- A. Tolland Conservation Corps – Mr. Symonds stated that Mr. Hankinson (not in attendance) told him that he did not have anything to report.
- B. Conservation Commission website additions – Mr. Holl explained that there had been some issues with the stability of the web hosting service but that he had put together a priority list: remove Donna Ellis’ event and add Mr. Symonds suggestions to the site. Mr. Holl added that there were some major issues in terms of redesign and that he would ideally like to make a connection with the website contact person so that he can send him/her an email to have items added to or deleted from the site. Another option would be to meet with the website contact person on Thursday evenings. Mr. Koss added that once a rhythm is in place it should work fine. Ms. MacDonald added that she has a CD of photos that would be great on the website. Mr. Holl suggested to Ms. MacDonald that requests for links to outside groups would need to be made and Mr. DiGenova suggested the photos be made available via a link from the site to a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Symonds commented that the format of the site follows that of the town hence the most important aspect is getting the content on the site. Mr. Holl inquired if there should be something on the site regarding the purpose of the Corps and Mr. Symonds responded that he would send that to Mr. Holl. Mr. Holl added that he will maintain notes on the website additions/updating process.

C. Management Plans – Discussed was that going forward the management plans would include more specific information germane to leaving items in regards to geocaching and that the stewards should have input. Mr. Holl questioned how the geocaching hobbyists would learn of this information. Mr. Koss explained that the organizer of a geocaching exercise has the responsibility to seek out and a duty to check this information. Ms. Query added this is a matter of education and it was perhaps a good time to have an educational piece as a Tolland Monthly article which would include the use of town property. She also inquired as to who would be the contact for such usage information and permission. Ms. MacDonald suggested that if there were questions or issues that the planning department would be the contact which would in turn contact the stewards.

Ms. MacDonald added that she would like the Auperin Management plan to include under “problems and concerns” screening of the open well and the marking of existing barbed wire. Further the plan should include a bench area by the pond as well as a trail under “possible uses”

Ms. Query asked how the issues of leashed animals should be addressed. Mr. Symonds commented that if the issue was definitive in the plans and stated that it must be enforced. Mr. Koss made the recommendation to the Commission that it would be a mistake not to include a more definitive statement in the plan given that the Commission had received a legitimate complaint. Mr. Symonds added that the language regarding that a dog be “under control of the owner” should be included but that parenthetically the town’s ordinance is that a dog must be leashed. Mr. Koss responded that the town rules needs to be stated in case someone does something to the contrary. Mr. Holl suggested adding “in accordance with the town ordinance”. Mr. Koss agreed that the plans must contain “dogs must be under the control of the owner at all times” and that it should also include that the town’s ordinance requires dogs to be leashed. Mr. Symonds suggested that this topic go to workshop

6. Reports of Subcommittees

A. Land Rating – none

B. Land Management – none

C. Education and Outreach – Ms. Query received an email from the D.E.P. regarding a walk on one of the properties and would like to have an Audubon technical expert tour and review the property. She would like to add this to the agenda for the workshop. Mr. Koss added that he would like to see worked in that geocaching is a new hobby which could be pursued by the young and old and if anyone would like to conduct this activity that he/she should contact Town Hall. Mr. Holl commented that this should be added to the workshop as well.

7. Announcements – none

8. Executive Session – 7:08PM – Requested via motion by Mr. Symonds and seconded by Ms. McDonald for the purposes of discussing land purchases. 7:20PM – Requested via motion by Ms. McDonald and seconded by Mr. Symonds to exit Executive Session

9. Adjournment – Mr. Symonds motioned that the meeting be adjourned at 9:24 P.M and that the clerk be paid. Ms. MacDonald seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Pascuzzi
Clerk