

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT
MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 8, 2011**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Present were: Lois Query (Vice Chair), Dorothy Mickiewicz, Richard Symonds, Cynthia MacDonald, Rich Merritt (alternate) and Dick Knight (alternate). Mr. DiGenova (Secretary) arrived at 7:10 p.m. Mr. Koss arrived at 7:55 p.m.

Not in attendance: Phil Moreschi (Chair)

Also present: David Grulke (Venture Crew 422, Mansfield), Arthur Jacques (Troop 61, Mansfield), Paul Grulke (Venture Crew 422, Mansfield),

Ms. Mickiewicz moved to seat Mr. Merritt and Mr. Knight as voting members. Mr. Symonds seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Addition to the Agenda – Under Item 3, Approval of Eagle Scout Bench Project; motioned by Mr. Symonds, seconded by Mr. Koss. All were in favor.

2. Public Comments

a. Comments from the public – 2 minutes – None

3. Boy Scouts

• Venture Crew 422, Mansfield – 5 minutes

Paul Grulke presented his Eagle Project report to the Commission. It includes bench designs for review. He will bring a timeline for the Commission.

Ms. Mickiewicz inquired where the 8 benches would be located. It was decided that at the next workshop the Commission will determine where they should be located.

Mr. Knight suggested that the Commission select 7 sites and keep 1 as a replacement. The Commission anticipates that it will have determined the locations by the end of January.

Mr. David Grulke noted that the Venture Crew completed the work, clearing the entire trail system, at the Benton Homestead. There were approximately 10 participants. He provided photographs to the Commission. Mr. Knight noted that the Benton Homestead property falls under the Tolland Historical Society and inquired if Mr. Grulke received approval to do this work. Mr. Grulke confirmed that indeed, the work was approved by Ms. Gail White.

• Troop 61, Mansfield – 5 minutes

Arthur Jacques provided an update on the invasive species project at the Sage Meadow property. The brush is too high so the work will need to wait until spring; ideally some of the snow will crush the material. Ms. Query inquired about the dam information in the report. Mr. Jacques explained that it was a typo and should be removed. There is no dam; hence, page 4 of the outline should read, “approve the

project and provide guidance.”

Mr. Jacques also updated the Commission on the bluebird house project. His father and himself purchased a GPS and will map out the houses on the properties.

- Approval of Eagle Scout Project – Bench Plan

Mr. Knight motioned that Paul Grulke’s Eagle Scout project as outlined in the proposal be approved and that the Chair be authorized to sign the proposal. Ms. MacDonald seconded the motion. All were in favor. Ms. Query signed the last page of the proposal.

4. Approval of Minutes – October 13, 2011 – 2 minutes

Mr. Symonds motioned to accept the minutes of the October 13th meeting. Mr. Merritt seconded the motion. The following changes were made: under item #7, the last item should read, “Ms. Mickiewicz moved to seat Mr. Merritt as a voting member”; under item #6, second bullet, the second to the last sentence should be crossed out; under item #7, second bullet, the second sentence should read “Mr. Symonds said the Commission has historically invited”. All were in favor. Ms. MacDonald abstained.

5. Committee Reports

a. Website

Mr. Symonds noted that the clerk advised him that at the December EDC meeting the Conservation Commission’s web site was suggested as a piece for the EDC to reference when planning maps and other information for its own site.

Ms. MacDonald visited the site looking for the November minutes and had to go via a new path to find the minutes. It seems that there is a new path system. Ms. Mickiewicz will check into it. Ms. MacDonald will continue to work on the King property notes for the site.

b. Tolland Conservation Corps – 15 minutes

Ms. Query noted that Mr. Hankinson sent his report to the Commission members and reviewed the report. The report is below:

*Tolland Conservation Corps Report for the Conservation Commission Meeting
12/8/11 Submitted by Ken Hankinson on 12/7/11*

Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the 12/8 Commission meeting. My 95 year old father-in-law is being honored at a veteran’s event which Pam and I will be attending.

Obviously the combined efforts of Irene and Alfred created more problems than expected for our fall work sessions. It was exactly a week after finishing clean-up from Irene that the snowstorm managed to undo most of those efforts.

Below is a brief status report for each of the open space parcels that have trails.

Schindler-Schmidt

had a group work session on 11/19 with 20 volunteers for approximately 60 man-hours. Trails clean and passable, still needs some work.

Shafran

had a group work session 12/3, 19 people, 47 man-hours. Trails clean and passable.

Knofla

trails are cleared and passable, however the connector to Hunter Road still needs to be done.

Stopplesworth

trails are cleared and passable.

King

trails are cleared and passable.

Weigold-Auperin

trails are cleared and passable. The gate fence at Weigold at Weigold road was vandalized and will need replacement of the two horizontal posts.

Campbell

trails are cleared and passable, but work is still needed on the Meadow trail.

Parciak

remains undetermined at this time and needs to be evaluated which, I plan to do on 12/9.

Palmer

clearing has been started and a group work session is planned for 12/17.

While most trails are clear, passable and relatively safe, hazards still exist on all properties and will continue to be a problem through the winter. Warning signs have been posted at all trailheads. An effort was made to clear many of the trees arching or leaning directly over the trails. Some that were deemed safe and not posing an immediate risk will be dealt with in the spring. Many "hangers" which are too high and out of reach still exist although some have fallen already. A decision was made not to cut a large tree to remove a hanger. Hopefully many of these will fall harmlessly over the winter.

In addition to the 3 group sessions, many smaller groups and individuals have worked very hard to clear the storm debris from the trails. These smaller groups will continue to work through the winter on an as needed basis to keep the trails safe. Peter Marteka wrote a great article on the Palmer property, Hartford Courant 12/2, unfortunately his visit was after the storm and before a clean-up session but he was kind enough to avoid dwelling on the damage.

From a fall budget standpoint we have spent approximately \$65 of the estimated \$193. We still will need to buy a little more gas, gas mix, and bar oil due to the increased use of chain saws (5 saws at the 12/3 session) but should still be under budget for the fall. Remaining dollars should be spent on sharpening or replacing chains for the chain saw volunteers.

If anyone has any questions or requires additional information on any Tolland Conservation Corps issues, please feel free to contact me.

I hope everyone has a Safe and Happy Holiday Season.

Regards,

Ken Hankinson

Tolland Conservation Corps

The written report of the Conservation Corps was accepted by the Commission with pleasure and included in the record in its entirety. No action was planned on the report.

Mr. Symonds suggested that the Commission revisit the policy on big trees in case there is a continuing safety hazard. A climber may be needed in the spring. Mr. Merritt agreed and suggested re-routing the trail as another option. Mr. DiGenova added that the trails are marked with warning signs

Mr. Symonds noted that the sign for the Stoppleworth property has arrived and will be installed in the morning. Mr. Hankinson has staked the location for the sign.

c. Willimantic River Alliance – update – 2 minutes

Ms. MacDonald explained that all of the paperwork from the WRA has been submitted to The Last Green Valley and from The Last Green Valley to John Monroe of the National Park Service for the NRT application. WRA meetings will resume in January. Ms. MacDonald added that when it comes to anything water related that the WRA would be happy to help coordinate any workshops or seminars.

d. Education & Outreach Committee Report – 2 minutes

Mr. Symonds reported that the Lodge has been reserved for Wednesday, March 21st for the Organic Lawn Care Program. Ms. Query would like to see this listed on the website.

Ms. MacDonald suggested that the Organic Lawn Care Program could be a kick off point for other seminars or workshops. Perhaps another event could be held on Earth Day, Sunday April 22nd such as a town-wide family hike day.

Ms. Query would like to see if Dr. Philpotts would be available to do a talk on the Parciak property; he did an outstanding presentation on the Palmer property. Mr. John Stake is willing to do another birding walk as well; perhaps a May date would work.

Ms. Query requested that if anyone would like to join the Education & Outreach committee or has any suggestions to please let her know.

Some options for advertising the Organic Lawn Care Seminar were discussed and ideas for promotion will be revisited closer to the date of the event.

6. Old Business

- Approve Conservation Commission brochure

Mr. Symonds motioned to approve the conservation commission brochure. Mr. Koss seconded the motion. The brochure was discussed.

Ms. Mickiewicz noted that there is a formatting issue due to a paper feeder problem. She is working on it.

Ms. Query expressed some concern regarding using the term 'quarry' listed under item F, Palmer Kendall Mountain Conservation Area. She noted that Dr. Philpotts did not believe it is a quarry. He believed it was glacier mud. It was determined that quotes should be put around 'quarry'. Mr. Koss noted that from the good doctor's standpoint there was not a mechanized effort to chisel the rocks but the rocks that fell were saleable based on their shape. He explained that quarry could mean simply peddling the rocks. He added that lore

has that it happened but there is no documentation.

Some options were discussed for addressing the format issue. Mr. Koss suggested the brochure be printed at 98% while Ms. MacDonald suggested possibly just editing the margins. Mr. DiGenova believed that it has to do with the gutter of the printer.

Mr. Knight inquired if the brochure had any differences from the previous version? Ms. Mickiewicz explained that the only changes were in the first paragraph and information Mr. Knight provided to Ms. Mickiewicz regarding writing from the seller's perspective.

All were in favor. Mr. Koss and Mr. DiGenova abstained due to the number of members present. The Commission expressed thanks to Ms. Mickiewicz.

- Discuss status of Management Plans – Sage Meadow Implementation Schedule and Luce

Mr. Symonds was not aware of anything new. The Commission is awaiting the maps.

Ms. Query discussed the Imrath property and she suggested that it be walked by the members in the fall. Mr. Knight would like to know the source of the funds for the Imrath property. At the last workshop, the Becker property was discussed and it was noted that it is divided into two pieces. At the workshop, Mr. Moreschi explained that the intended inperpetuity open space is along a geophysical line. A brief discussion took place regarding the property and sources of funds used for purchase. Ms. MacDonald believes that Ms. Farmer was looking into the matter. Ms. Query noted that as a Commission it should know where funds came from and Mr. Symonds explained that the information is on the list (excel sheet).

Mr. Symonds added that up to this point it has been clear which properties needed a management plan from the Commission but that perhaps in the future it should ask for a formal designation. There are a couple of other areas for which the Commission could create management plans that would benefit the Town. Ms. Mickiewicz suggested that the Commission start with those that are on the list for which the Commission is the steward.

Mr. Symonds explained that traditionally one person does a management plan and the Commission goes from there. Ms. Query commented that the properties up for discussion should be walked. Mr. Knight believed the Becker property should be addressed first, has the best chance for quick development and an easy one to walk. Mr. DiGenova suggested a winter walk; Ms. Mickiewicz will request the Becker maps. A decision will be made in January when the Commission will go out as well as prioritize some of the other properties. An item for the agenda in January is to review the properties which the Town has purchased that there are no plans for and to plan the dates of the walks.

- Discuss "Rights of First Refusal" – Willimantic River frontage

Ms. MacDonald motioned to table this until Ms. Farmer was present. Mr. Symonds seconded the motion. All were in favor. It is pending further information from Ms. Farmer.

7. New Business

- Review possible design for the “King Riverside Conservation Area”

A discussion of the sign sizes and other details took place. Ms. Mickiewicz motioned that the King Property should have a sign the same size as other signs recently installed (\$1200) and on the street a two-sided metal highway marker. Mr. Knight seconded the motion. All were in favor. Mr. Koss abstained.

- Approve proposed 2012 meeting schedule

A discussion took place and it was decided that the December 27th workshop would be deleted. Mr. Knight moved to approve the schedule as amended. Mr. Symonds seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Discussion concerning Water Quality and Conservation

Mr. Knight explained that he wished to have this item on the agenda to encourage the Commission to have this as an initiative in 2012. There are not enough activities focusing on water quality. He noted that the state, in its wisdom, has put in a tool to act as a buffer as an encouragement for those organizations to do what they can to conserve water and keep it pure. Mr. Knight inquired as to what prompted the Town’s request for additional water. Mr. Symonds offered to explain the diversion permit.

Mr. Knight said that an explanation was not necessary but noted that the Commission needs to be more attuned to its responsibility for water quality. Ms. MacDonald expressed concern that Mr. Knight believes that this is part of the Commission’s charge. She explained the Commission’s responsibility is to support ground and surface water protection through the acquisition of land areas and their appropriate property but disagrees that it is the Commission’s charge to directly affect the water commission. Mr. Symonds clarified that the Commission should focus on water quality as well as on land and its conservation. Mr. Koss the noted that the organic lawn care program is responsive to this by not contaminating the water. Mr. Knight read a note from Eric Thomas, Watershed Management regarding water withdrawals and water conservation. Ms. MacDonald agrees that water conservation and quality should be an education and outreach initiative that could be an inter-cooperative effort with water and sewer and the water commission.

Further discussion on water quality and conservation followed.

A discussion took place on the Commission establishing a focused objective in 2012 with respect to water conservation and water quality. Mr. Knight will put together an outline focused on water quality and conservation that can be added to the Organic Lawn Care seminar. Ms. MacDonald feels it’s important for people to know where their water comes from and its limitations; hence, it would be a good education opportunity. The Commission is amenable to looking further into this.

8. Announcements

Mr. Symonds noted that Roseanne Gottier has announced 2 additional maps to the book and that there is an error on the map for Crandall pond.

Ms. Mickiewicz would like an executive session added to the January agenda.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Symonds motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:39 p.m. and to pay the clerk. Ms. Mickiewicz seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa A. Pascuzzi

Clerk