



City of Shelton Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes for April 6, 2022

This meeting was held virtually. Video recording is posted on the Conservation Commission's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UICDXpgOCmI>

Members Present: Tom Harbinson (Chair), Bill Dyer, Sheri Dutkanicz, Jim Tate, Ed McCreery, Tom Wilson.

Also Present: Teresa Gallagher, Natural Resource Manager

The meeting was called to order at 8:03 pm by Tom Harbinson.

Meeting Minutes: Ed McCreery made a motion to approve the minutes for March 2, 2022. Seconded by Sheri Dutkanicz. All were in favor.

Natural Resource Manager Report (Teresa Gallagher):

Garden Committee: Registrations for 2022 are complete and the season has begun. Weekly work parties are being planned for weeding and invasive plant removal at Eklund Garden, Birchbank, and Trombetta Woods.

Litter Committee: Shelton Clean Sweep is this month. A partnership with Shelton Clean Up Project, which organizes litter cleanup events, is developing.

Conservation: An article about Centennial Watershed State Forest was submitted for the Spring 2022 Shelton Life publications. Teresa Gallagher found that most people were not aware what the state forest is, even though it includes 940 acres in Shelton. It makes conversations about extending Stockmal Trail to the Trombetta Woods open space through the state forest more difficult.

Complaints about dirt bikes between Natures Lane and Wesley Heights have been received. Riders are using the closed portion of Old Coram Road to access private conservation lands behind Wesley Heights. The land was posted 'no trespassing' in 2020. The old road was previously blocked with a Jersey barrier, but a nearby tree fell and was cleared, creating a gap wide enough for ATVs. The gap needs to be blocked by the City.

Trails: French's Hill - The new trail was signed as required by the DEEP open space grant contract, the trail map posted online, and DEEP staff notified of the new public access.

Arthur's Court Trail - The Town of Stratford's new trail map for Roosevelt Forest shows a trail heading north along an old road to Route 8 and then east through state lands to Arthurs Court in Shelton. Teresa Gallagher posted a query to the Facebook Trails Group whether anyone had information about the trail and was told by several residents that it had been there for decades, including by residents who used to bike and ride horses on it. Looking at old maps, this appears to be the original route of the Paugussett Trail before the trail was abandoned south of Indian Well. There is a question about public access from Arthurs Court. A resident at the end of the cul-de-sac has told people to leave and that they cannot park there. The Police Department was asked for a determination about the matter. They reported that people can park and the trail may be accessed. The neighbor is disputing this and said the Police gave warning tickets to three cars over the past year for parking on the street.

Paugussett Trail dumping at Indian Well: About 30 tires and a mattress were dumped off of Indian Well Road onto the Paugussett Trail where the Trails Committee extended it several years ago. Every year there is extensive dumping in this location. Teresa Gallagher has been looking into moving the trail away from the road and contacted CFPA and Indian Well Park Manager after identifying a feasible route. The State Parks Department wants to take a look at that end of the park first. A Boy Scout troop is scheduled to pick up the tires for Shelton Clean Sweep.

Eversource Powerline Upgrade: A meeting earlier in the day was held with members of the Shelton Trails Committee and six representatives from Eversource to discuss the proposed replacement of powerlines towers with larger monopoles through French's Hill and Shelton Lakes. The impact along the trails is expected to be significant, both during construction and after the work is done. There are several locations where Eversource proposes access out of their right-of-way on City open space properties and a representative stated that they had already received permission for that from the Mayor's office. This needs to be verified. The Trails Committee was not given grading plans or a clear idea of what the work will entail. Teresa Gallagher asked Eversource staff if the recent work at Black Rock State Park was typical for what they planned in Shelton and was told yes, so she planned to visit the site. She also coincidentally hiked through the work zone last year and could therefore share her experiences with that. Trails Committee members were disturbed to be told by Eversource staff that they had already received all their approvals for stormwater and the Natural Diversity Database, and therefore were unwilling to consider any changes to their plans that

would require them to go back and revisit those approvals. For example, one of the new monopoles would require the removal of a significant portion of a landmark called Great Ledge. Eversource should have consulted the landowner first before getting all its approvals.

Trails Committee Report: Bill Dyer summarized the Trails Committee meeting held prior to the Conservation Commission meeting. For details of that meeting, read the Trails Committee meeting minutes. The Committee has scheduled a guided hike for National Trails Day, June 4. Jim Tate reported that the Mayor wants to have an opening for the new trails barn. That should be done on Trails Day. Bill Dyer said the Committee was hosting the hike in the morning, but could do that in the afternoon. Jim Tate said it needs to be a big deal. Have live music and refreshments and get it on the Mayor's calendar. A water line to the barn should be connected as soon as possible.

8-24 Referral to purchase Mohegan Road property for open space. This property consists of 1.28 acres located opposite High Meadow Road (Tax Assessor Map 83 Lot 11), abutting the Far Mill River upstream from the drinking water reservoir, and surrounded by other conservation lands within a designated greenway corridor. Conservation Commission members had discussed the property extensively during previous meetings.

Jim Tate made a motion to endorse the purchase of 1.28 acres of land along Mohegan Road for open space preservation. Seconded by Sheri Dutkanicz. All were in favor.

Application to change zoning Schedule A for agriculture aspects in R1/R1A >10 ac. Tom Harbinson reported that the proposal was put forth by Stone Gardens Farm and would allow farms with more than 10 acres to have a farmstand within a residential zone. Jim Tate thought that might lead to parking issues, as has happened at Laurel Glen Farm and people parking along the road. Tom Harbinson said the proposal would require parking spaces of no less than one space per 150 s.f. of gross floor area. Members did not wish to comment on the proposal.

“Open Space Abounds in Shelton” article in Herald. A high profile article about Shelton's open space purchases since the 1990s was printed in the Shelton Herald, CT Post, and New Haven Register. Jim Tate said that back in the 1990's there was a master plan and goals for open space and farmland preservation. It is time to revisit that. Development pressures are coming back and we need to have a grand plan, otherwise we'll be reactive. Properties were purchased to along river corridors to protect water quality, not to stop development, and they serve us well. Tom Harbinson responded that it was time to update Conservations “Quality of Life” list of desired properties and reach out to those landowners once again.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm

Meeting minutes were prepared by Teresa Gallagher and should be considered in draft form until adopted at the next meeting.