

Conservation Commission

Town of Willington

Minutes

Wednesday September 20, 2023 at 7:00 PM

[Remote Meeting via Zoom]

- I. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order @ 7:04 pm by Chairman Kathy Demers
- II. **Roll Call / Seating of Alternates:** Members present: Kathy Demers, Carol Jordan, Bob Shabot, Jackie Kulig and Patty Phillips. Excused: Marilyn Schreiber and Nora Jones (alternate)
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by BS/CJ: *"The minutes of July 19, 2023 be approved as written."* Motion carried unanimously.
- IV. **Present to Speak:** None
- V. **Finance:** Treasurer's Report: C. Jordan reported a budget balance of \$1,015.28 after recent expenditures of \$324.72 for trail signs, \$60 for CACIWC and \$100 for CLCC memberships. The present value of the Open Space Fund is \$95,000 and includes \$25,000 from the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and an expenditure of \$850 for the appraisal deposit. C. Jordan also noted that the commission has received a generous \$500 donation from a former resident who lived in the Ruby homestead which was located in the past on the property that is now Fenton-Ruby Park. She recently visited the Park and was impressed with how the open space is being managed. The donation will be deposited in the Fenton-Ruby Park account which is part of the Park and Recreation Capital Fund.
K. Demers noted that the CC still has access to \$3,500 in ARPA funds that can be used for building materials related to park structure maintenance. Funds must be obligated by 12/31/2024 and spent by 3/31/2026.
- VI. **Old Business**
 - A. **Properties Management**
 1. Fenton-Ruby Park / Drobney Sanctuary:
 - Steward's Report/Property & Trail Maintenance:* No major issues reported by trail stewards. A large tree along the Taylor Pond Trail which had been girdled by beavers was a potential hazard and was completely taken down by B. Shabot and volunteer Chris Demers. Several of the trail bridges and boardwalks need repair/replacing. Materials to finish the trail kiosk for the Knowlton/Talmadge properties are needed. On a motion by CJ/BS: *"The CC will expend ARPA funds to purchase materials for trail maintenance at Fenton-Ruby Park and the Knowlton and Talmadge properties."* Motion carried unanimously.
 - Beaver Dam:* P. Phillips has been monitoring the beaver dam, pond level and impacted trail section regularly. She reported the pond level appears stable and the trail condition is drier. The trail reroute is working well, but the boardwalk may need widening before winter.
 - Fenton-Ruby Park Work Day:* Members scheduled the event on Saturday, October 28 from 9:30 am to 12 noon (rain date October 29). Work tasks will include boardwalk/bridge repair; reblazing trails with paint and brushing out narrowed trails. The "Friends of Fenton-Ruby Park" volunteers will be asked to help with tasks. On a motion by CJ/BS: *"CC budget funds will be used to purchase refreshments for workday volunteers."* Motion carried unanimously.
 2. Knowlton Preserve / Talmadge Tract:
 - *Stewards' Report:* No major issues reported. A broken tree blocking the Knowlton Spur trail was cleared by volunteers. Trail Steward Ellie Lowell reported to K. Demers that the Split Rock Trail is getting more use and is easier to follow now that the grass and leaves are packed down. Hikers she's met on the trail have commented that the trail is well marked and they are enjoying the new trail.
 - *Kiosk:* Backing board, roof and large trail system map will be added this fall.
 - *Rock pile:* Still needs to be moved by Public Works.
 - *Permanent Trail Map Signs:* Have been purchased and will be mounted this fall.

- B. Town Development:** B. Shabot reported on developments being followed by PZC.
- C. Collaborative Organization News & Communication:** The CC has renewed its membership with the CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions and the CT Land Conservation Council.
- D. Regional Pollinator Pathway Initiatives:** No report.
- E. Open Space Opportunities:**
- 1) Burma Road property.
- Appraisal Report:* Members discussed the final appraisal report which was well researched and very detailed. On a motion by BS/PP: *"The CC accepts the appraisal report and recommends that the \$850 invoice balance be paid to Silverstein Appraisal Services for the completed market appraisal of the Burma Road property using the Open Space Fund account as previously approved at Town Meeting on 5/30/2023."* Motion carried unanimously.
- Lustig Road access:* K. Demers noted that Selectwoman Wiczenski has contacted Ashford's First Selectman about the status of Lustig Road and is awaiting an answer. Members tabled considering any recommendations about acquiring the property for open space until information about Lustig Road is available.
- F. Willington Wire:** Member M. Schreiber submitted an article about the open space hiking trails in Willington for the Fall/Winter edition.
- G. Other:**
- Outreach:* CC alternate member Nora Jones will be reading a children's story on hibernation and showcasing a conservation education kit at the Willington Public Library on Saturday, October 7th. Nora is also a local teacher and DEEP Master Wildlife volunteer.
- Membership* - K. Demers noted that 1 regular and 2 alternate seats are still open on the CC and encouraged members to invite new people to attend our meetings/consider serving.
- VII. New Business**
- A. Communications:** CLCC sent an acknowledgement letter for the CC's membership donation.
- B. Other:**
- Phragmites Control:* B. Shabot and P. Phillip will work on phragmites management at FRP.
- Ashford Farmer's Market:* J. Kulig noted that Willington farmers participate in the weekly Ashford Farmer's Market. It will be extended through the winter and held in the Knowlton Hall (library) from 10 am to 12:30 pm on the 1st and 3rd Sundays from December through April.
- VIII. Next Scheduled Meeting:** October 18, 2023
- IX. Adjournment:** On a motion by BS/PP: Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Minutes submitted by Kathy.Demers, Chairman and secretary pro tem

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TOWN CLERK