

Conservation Commission
Town of Willington

Minutes

Wednesday June 15, 2022 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:** Regular members present included: Peter Andersen, Carol Jordan, Bob Shabot, Patty Phillips and Kathy Demers. Jackie Kulig joined the meeting at approximately 8:00 pm.
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by CJ/PP: **"The minutes of the May 18, 2022 meeting be approved as written."** Unanimously approved.
- IV. **Present to Speak:** None.
- V. **Treasurer's Report:** Budget expended to date: \$1254.03 and approximately \$94 still encumbered for girl scout project. On a motion by PA/BS: **"The WCC will reimburse Kathy Demers \$39.76 for materials purchased and used to reposition and level the fishing platform at Fenton-Ruby Park."** Unanimously approved.
- VI. **Old Business**
 - A. **Talmadge Estate Property Acquisition/DEEP grant application:** The Town recently received a letter from DEEP stating a matching grant of \$81,250 had been approved for the purchase of the property. Funds would be released when all required conditions were met. Closing on the property is anticipated later this month.
 - B. **Properties Management**
 - 1. **Fenton-Ruby Park / Drobney Sanctuary:**

Maintenance: 1) Trail stewards Josh Langevin and Kayne Graveline completed brush trimming on the Weigold and Ruby Trails in May.
2) P. Andersen discussed donating two benches that could be secured with long screws to each end of the fishing platform. Will also need to use pipe and eye bolts to secure the platform, so as to allow it to float in case of high water again. On a motion by KD/BS: **"The WCC will expend up to \$100 to purchase materials to secure the fishing platform and the benches onto the platform at Fenton-Ruby Park."** Unanimously approved.
Programs: On June 4th, environmental educator and resident Barbara Clark led a nature walk along the Taylor Pond Trail. There were 14 participants, including three commission members and one P&R staff. Refreshments included natural teas and a dip made from wild edible plants. The event was well received.
 - 2. **Knowlton Preserve / Talmadge Tract:**

Maintenance: No report
Parking Lot Signage: Tabled until the Town closes on the new Talmadge Estate Property on Mason Road.
 - C. **Town Development: Planning and Zoning Commission:** 1) Members discussed application PZ-22-10 related to a zone change and concept plan that could include a large warehouse and parking areas on 158 acres on River Road. The WCC will provide advisory comments to PZC for its public hearing on June 21. Members reviewed the application in the context of the conservation goals and natural resource, open space and community character maps provided in the Town's POCD. On a motion by PA/CJ: **"The Chairman**

be authorized to provide an advisory letter on behalf of the Willington Conservation Commission to the Planning & Zoning Commission related to the public hearing for PZ-22-10: Zone Change and Concept Plan application.” 4 ayes (P. Andersen, C. Jordan, P. Phillip, and K. Demers); B. Shabot abstained. Motion carries.

2) B. Shabot and K. Demers noted that the PZC opened a public hearing recently regarding zoning regulations related to cannabis establishments, including retail stores and growers. B. Shabot noted that a person who has an interest in establishing a licensed retail store in Willington also spoke at the hearing.

D. Collaborative Organization News & Communication: No news.

E. Regional Pollinator Pathway Initiatives: K Demers noted the Willington Girl Scout troop is continuing to maintain the pollinator garden they established at Fenton-Ruby Park in May. They will be placing pollinator garden educational information in the Park kiosk and would also like to post educational materials on the WCC webpage. Members agreed this would be a great resource. K. Demers stated that the GS troop also recently installed a pollinator garden at Hall School and engaged students there to paint rocks which now encircle the garden. The troop would like permission to hold a community rock painting event at the Fenton-Ruby Park and use the rocks to encircle the pollinator garden they established there. WCC members generally agreed that engaging the public was a great idea, but felt that placing painted rocks around the garden was not in harmony with the Park management plan and goals of leaving the setting as natural as possible. They suggested the Girl Scouts consider holding a different kind of event to publicize the pollinator garden.

F. ARPA Request: The ARPA Commission held a virtual public hearing on 5/24/2022 and several people spoke in favor of the WCC’s two funding requests related to \$2,800 for a forestry plan and \$3,500 for bridge building materials. The ARPA Commission voted and unanimously approved both requests. C. Jordan will check with the finance office to find out what the WCC needs to do to access the funds for the projects.

G. Other Discussion: 1) C. Jordan noted the DEEP award for the Talmadge Estate Property was \$18,750 more than anticipated by the Town and suggested that once funds were ready to be released, that WCC consider asking the BOF to consider reapportioning the amounts to be refunded to the Reserve and Open Space funds. K. Demers suggested they ask that the additional amount go directly back to the Open Space fund. The commission will review these request options at a future meeting. 2) K. Demers noted that member Nora Jones had spoken with a person using a double-wide stroller on the Taylor Pond Trail who suggested that the bridge and trails be made accessible for strollers. Members discussed that modifying the trail to accommodate strollers was not possible in the foreseeable future, but noted that other areas in the park, such as Burma Road could be used. J. Kulig suggested mowing a path around the edge of the hay field for such use. Members discussed that they did not have the resources at present to keep such a path regularly mowed.

VII. New Business

A. Communications: None.

B. Other: 1) *Potential Trail Steward/Volunteer Work Day:* K. Demers suggested another trail work day be contemplated for the fall and suggested targeting removal of brush and invasive plants from the Taylor Homestead site. P. Phillips suggested working on cutting back the saplings and brush overgrowth in the second meadow/bench area along the Taylor Pond Trail. Potential date to be discussed at next meeting.

VIII. Next Meeting: July 20, 2022

IX. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:35 pm.

Minutes submitted by K. Demers, Chairman and secretary

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT
Received for record June 17, 2022
At 9:23 am [Signature]