

Conservation Commission
Town of Willington

Minutes

Wednesday July 20, 2022 at 7:00 PM
[Remote Meeting via Zoom]

- I. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order @ 7:06 pm by Chairman Kathy Demers
- II. **Roll Call / Seating of Alternates:** Regular members present included: Peter Andersen, Carol Jordan, Marilyn Schreiber, Patty Phillips and Kathy Demers.
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by CJ/PA: **"The minutes of the June 15, 2022 meeting be approved as written."** Unanimously approved.
- IV. **Present to Speak:** Resident and trail volunteer Chris Demers stated he had built a wooden bench and would like to donate it for use at Fenton Ruby Park.
- V. **Treasurer's Report:** C. Jordan reported that the commission will close its 2021-2022 FY having expended \$1,463.16 of its \$1,500 annual budget.
- VI. **Old Business**
 - A. **Talmadge Estate Property Acquisition/DEEP grant application:** The Town closed on the Talmadge Estate property on June 26, 2022. The commission will work on fulfilling the tasks required by DEEP so that the matching Open Space grant funds can be released.
The commission will ask the BOS to grant authority to the WCC to manage the new property, since this is in line with the commission's current responsibility of managing other Town open space properties. Plans to install signage, a new trail and set a date to dedicate the property will be discussed at future meetings.
 - B. **Properties Management**
 - 1. **Fenton-Ruby Park / Drobney Sanctuary:**
 - a) Members accepted Chris Demers' bench offer and will place it on Julia's Trail, so park users can sit and enjoy the view of the Fenton River.
 - b) P. Phillips noted a large tree down on Burma Road between the parking lot and Taylor Pond trailhead this week and notified the Public Works Dept. The crew arrived quickly and removed the tree. The commission is grateful for their help.
 - c) P. Andersen has obtained hardware to anchor the fishing platform and will also be installing some benches on it so park users can have a place to sit near the pond.
 - d) C. Jordan noted that Girl Scouts have installed signage for the Pollinator Garden.
 - e) K. Demers noted that a student from UConn's Natural Resources Department is doing a study on beavers and requested permission to fly a drone over the beaver lodge in the Park's pond to measure its size. Members agreed they would support the research by allowing the drone to be used.
 - f) K. Demers noted that she and Bob Shabot had met with a resident at 222 Moose Meadow Road who had called the Town with a complaint about vegetation growing on both sides of the stone boundary wall between his property and the Park's hayfield. It was noted that the resident may have cut down several trees on the Town's property. K. Demers explained to the resident that he could cut the vegetation on his side of the boundary wall, but he could not continue to cut trees or any other vegetation on the Town's property. She informed him that the Conservation Commission manages the Park property and intentionally leaves the vegetation buffer along the boundary wall for wildlife habitat. K. Demers has reported the issue to the First Selectwoman and is waiting for a response about any other action the Town may decide to take.

2. Knowlton Preserve / Talmadge Tract:

-*Maintenance:* No report

-*Parking Lot Signage:* A local Boy Scout has expressed interest in taking on the construction of a new kiosk as an Eagle Scout Project, but has not committed yet.

-*Forest Management Plan:* The current 2012-2022 plan is expiring this year and a new plan which includes the Talmadge Estate property will be needed. In March, Connwood submitted a proposal to do the work for \$2,800. ARPA funding for this item has been approved. On a motion by KD/CJ: **"The WCC recommends that the Town of Willington contract with Connwood Foresters Inc. to provide a forest stewardship and wildlife management plan for the Knowlton Preserve, Talmadge Conservation Tract and Talmadge Estate properties using appropriated ARPA-26 funding in the amount of \$2,800."** Unanimously approved. The recommendation and contract document will be sent to the BOS.

C. **Town Development: Planning and Zoning Commission:** 1) The WCC has submitted a letter to PZC for the public hearing on PZ-22-10 related to a zone change and concept plan which includes a large warehouse and parking areas on 158 acres on River Road. The public hearing began on July 19th and remains open. 2) KD noted that she had received a copy of a Water Quality Sampling report sent to the Town's wetland agent in June 2022 from Love's Travel Stop and it indicates that Love's has not been doing water sampling every quarter since construction started, as required by their permit approval conditions. Because IWWC has not been meeting regularly, she made the PZC aware of this concern.

D. **Collaborative Organization News & Communication:** No news.

E. **Regional Pollinator Pathway Initiatives:** KD noted that some members of the regional pollinator group sowed native plant seeds and are looking for volunteers to repot and care for the plants through the summer. The plants will be available free to anyone who wishes to establish or add to a pollinator garden.

VII. **Other Discussion:**

- A. The commission's 2022 Raymond K. Daley environmental action award was given to Peter Andersen this week to honor his 27 years of service on the Conservation Commission (the last 19 years as Chairman) as well as his property stewardship work on Joshua's Trust's Chenes Roches Preserve located on Blair Road in Willington. He and his wife Judy will be moving to Maine soon. The commission wishes them the best in their new location and heartily thanks Peter for volunteering considerable time, effort, and leadership skills to the Town of Willington and residents and caring for its natural resources and open spaces.
- B. The commission discussed succession issues and suggested that newer members consider learning and taking on some tasks done by longer-term members. The commission will look for opportunities to recruit new members.

VIII. **New Business**

A. **Communications:** The owner of a seven acre parcel on 74 Burma Road contacted the commission about her interest in selling the property to the Town to add onto the Fenton Ruby Park. She noted she has not been able to put it on the realty market because portions of Burma Road leading to the property are not maintained. The commission discussed possible acquisition concerns related to the property including an old camp and a pond with an earthen dam. KD has contacted the First Selectwoman about the communication.

B. **Other:** None

IX. **Next Meeting:** August 17, 2022

X. **Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 8:11 pm.

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

RECEIVED
WILLINGTON, CT.

2022 JUL 22 A 8:59


TOWN CLERK