

Conservation Commission
Town of Willington
Minutes
Wednesday November 15, 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: Bob Shabot, Jackie Kulig, Patty Phillips, Nora Jones, and Kathy Demers. Members Carol Jordan and Marilyn Schreiber were excused. On a motion by B. Shabot/P. Phillips *“Alternate Nora Jones be seated for Carol Jordan.”* Motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by: B. Shabot/J. Kulig: *“The minutes of October 18, 2023 be approved as written.”* Motion carried unanimously.
- IV. **Present to Speak:** none
- V. **Treasurer’s Report/Finances:** -No new expenditures from annual commission budget (Remaining balance of \$1,015.28). -ARPA 27 funds: Expenditure of \$342.55 at O.L. Willards in October for materials related to park maintenance and structure repair. (Remaining balance \$3157.45).
- VI. **New Business**
 - A. *Willington Public Library: Collaboration on Summer Events:*

Steve Jones, programmer at the library introduced himself and described the upcoming Summer Reading Program’s “Conservation Theme.” Discussion was held on programs and events that could be co-sponsored by the commission. Ideas included education programs about pollinators, raptor rehabilitation, opossum rescue, reptiles, and seed sharing. Steve will contact the commission this winter to firm up some possible plans.
 - B. *Willford Farms LLC/ Hull Forestry/Potential Timber Harvest on Conservation Easement Area.*

Austin Harmon, Forester from Hull Forest Products shared they plan to do a timber harvest this winter on the privately owned Willford Farms property (off Meadow Lane and Rte 74) and discussed their interest in doing a harvest on the associated 20 acre Conservation Easement (CE) area. A “management harvest,” taking 20-30% of the poorly formed or diseased trees, took place on the property about 10 years ago. Their current plan would be to take most of the trees that are 20-22 inches in diameter or more to open up the canopy to allow seedlings to get sunlight and grow. Hull will have to go to the Inland Wetlands Commission for the general forestry application for the whole property and to the Planning and Zoning Commission to get permission to do any harvesting on the CE area. Hull will have to talk to the Board of Selectmen about a temporary right-of-way through Town open space to access Meadow Lane. They would like the Conservation Commission’s thoughts on the CE area, since the CC is advisory to the other commissions. The CC viewed maps of the property & CE area and asked questions about the goals for the harvest, location of wetlands and stream crossings, easement boundary marking, public access, hunting and retaining snags and brush on the CE area. J. Kulig was concerned that the proposed “diameter limiting” type of harvest would not be in keeping with the terms of the original CE agreement which allows only for tree and shrub thinning and removal of dead trees. Mr. Harmon noted that Hull was open to treating the CE

area differently if the Town desired. CC members felt that a site walk would be important before making any comments or suggestions to the other land use commissions and Board of Selectman and will post a Special Meeting/Site Walk with the forester on 11/28 at 9 am (Rain date 11/29). Mr. Harmon will flag the CE perimeter and wetlands prior to the walk. Members will also do a monitoring walk of the two adjacent town open space properties on Meadow Lane at that time. Property abutters will be notified by mail.

- C. Willington Public Library/Raffle Basket Fund Raiser: The commission discussed type of basket theme and items that would educate people about conservation issues, nature study and eco-friendly products. N. Jones volunteered to purchase items and prepare the basket. B. Shabot offered to provide an old sugar bucket in lieu of a basket if needed. On a motion by B. Shabot/J. Kulig: *"The CC will expend up to \$100 to purchase items to include in a nature/eco-friendly themed basket for the Willington Public Library's fund raiser."*

D. Other: None

VII. Old Business

A. Properties Management

1. Fenton-Ruby Park / Drobney Sanctuary

- *Stewards' Reports / Maintenance:* Ruby Trail was re-blazed and trees cleared.
- *Fenton Ruby Park Work Day Report:* On Oct 28th, Taylor Pond Trail was brushed out and several park boardwalks were repaired by 21 community volunteers, including Boy Scouts and their leaders from Troop 82, Girl Scouts and their leader from Troop 67079, and several residents and commission members.

2. Knowlton Preserve / Talmadge Conservation Tract

- *Stewards' Reports:* No trail issues reported.
- *Parking Lot:* Volunteer Chris Demers installed a new Kiosk and Trail Map Box in the parking lot area.
- *Permanent Trail Map Signs:* Aluminum signs with QR codes now up at trailheads.

C. Town Development: (PZC; IWWC; ZBA) – Nothing to report.

D. Collaborative Organization News & Communication: Nothing to report.

E. Regional Pollinator Pathway Initiatives: Nothing to report.

F. Open Space Opportunities

1. Burma Road property

- *Lustig Road access:* Tabled. Awaiting to hear back from First Selectwoman Wiecewski who was going to talk with the Town Attorney about how we might work with abutting property owners to develop a ROW agreement.

2. Other: None

G. Willington Wire –M. Schreiber will be working on submission due December 22nd.

H. Membership – Membership terms for Bob Shabot, Marilyn Schreiber and Kathy Demers expire 12-1-2023. All three are willing to continue serving for the next 3 year term.

2024 Schedule – The consensus of members was to continue meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7 pm.

VIII. Next Meeting: December 20, 2023

IX. **Adjournment:** The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:12 pm on a motion by B. Shabot/N. Jones.

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