

Conservation Commission
Town of Willington
Minutes
Wednesday December 20, 2023 at 7:00 PM
[Remote Meeting via Zoom]

- I. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order @ 7:03 pm by Chairman Kathy Demers
- II. **Roll Call / Seating of Alternates:** Members present: Bob Shabot, Carol Jordan, Nora Jones, and Kathy Demers. Member Patty Phillips was excused. On a motion by B. Shabot/C. Jordan: *“Alternate Nora Jones be seated for Patty Phillips.”* Motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by: B. Shabot/N. Jones: *“The minutes of November 15, 2023 be approved as written.”* Motion carried unanimously. Vote on minutes of Special Meeting/Site Walk on November 28th tabled, since members Jackie Kulig and Patty Phillips who attended site walk were not present. On a motion by: B. Shabot/N. Jones: *“The minutes of December 6, 2023 be approved as written.”* Motion carried unanimously.
- IV. **Present to Speak:** Selectman Matt Clark thanked the commission for their work.
- V. **Treasurer’s Report/Finances:** - C. Jordan stated that \$110.12 had been spent in November for library donation basket items; current budget balance = \$905.16. ARPA 27 funds: No new expenditures. Annual budget request will be discussed next meeting.
- VI. **New Business**
 - A. Election of Officers for 2024: On a motion by: C. Jordan/N. Jones: *“Nominate Kathy Demers as Chairman.”* Motion carried unanimously. On a motion by: B. Shabot/N. Jones: *“Nominate Carol Jordan as Treasurer.”* Motion carried unanimously and both members agreed to serve in these roles. Bob Shabot declined a nomination by C. Jordan and N. Jones as Vice Chairman due to his role as Vice Chairman on the Planning and Zoning Commission. There were no nominations or offers to serve in the Secretary position. C. Jordan and K. Demers encouraged members to consider sharing secretary duties at meetings, so as to relieve the chairman from the task.
 - B. CIP Request for FY 2024/2025 through 2028/2029: Request is due by January 16th. Members discussed last year’s CIP Open Space Fund request for \$30,000 annually x 5 years and final plan approval of \$25,000 for first year and \$30,000 for remaining four years. Members discussed that O.S. funds are needed for land purchase, conservation easements, appraisals, surveys, and legal fees. It can be helpful to have adequate funds on hand to move quickly on a priority property if needed. The CC is currently working on a potential land purchase that would require use of O.S. funds. C. Jordan noted the O.S. Fund balance in September was approximately \$95,000. On a motion by B. Shabot /C. Jordan: *“The CC recommends the CIP appropriate \$30,000 annually for the next five years for the Open Space Fund.”* Motion carried unanimously.
- VII. **Old Business**
 - A. Willford Farms/Hull Forestry/Potential Timber Harvest on Conservation Easement Area (CEA). K. Demers recapped steps the CC has taken to review the potential harvest and make final recommendations for the CEA. A recommendation letter was sent to IWWC, who approved the general harvest on the property as well as the CEA recommendations on 12/18. B. Shabot reported that the PZC approved the harvest on the CEA based on the CC’s recommendations last night. Hull will now need to seek the BOS approval for a right-of-way (ROW) across Town Open Space property off Meadow Land. The CC will recommend the BOS grant the ROW.

B. Properties Management

1. Fenton-Ruby Park / Drobney Sanctuary

- *Stewards' Reports / Maintenance*: Today B. Shabot, K. Demers, P. Phillips and volunteer Chris Demers repositioned a tethered bridge on the Taylor Pond Trail that had been displaced by flood waters related to heavy rains two days ago. The Boy Scout bridge and beaver dam were intact despite high pond waters. K. Demers noted that Ruby Trail steward Kayne Gregory has given his notice. The CC is grateful for his volunteer service. K. Demers will send out a list of trail steward responsibilities so members can share with potential volunteers.

2. Knowlton Preserve / Talmadge Conservation Tract

- *Stewards' Reports*: No trail issues reported.

C. Town Development: (PZC; IWWC; ZBA) – No reports.

D. Collaborative Organization News & Communication: K. Demers noted that Willington belongs to the North Central Conservation District which provides natural resource education and support to municipal land use commissions, including site plan reviews. She also shared this info with IWWC members this week.

E. Regional Pollinator Pathway Initiatives: No report.

F. Open Space Opportunities:

1. *Burma Road property*

-Lustig Road access: K. Demers will follow up with Selectman Tanaka about the status of talks with the Town Attorney about how we might work with abutting property owners to develop a ROW agreement along the discontinued portion of Lustig Road.

2. *Other*: B. Shabot noted that a 36-acre forested property off Jared Sparks Road is the site of the original Jared Sparks homestead and may have historic value to the Town. It is also adjacent to 19 acres of Town open space. Discussion was held that the CC could inquire if the owners, who live out of town, might be interested in preserving the property. K. Demers will check with the tax assessor about how to contact the owners.

G. Willington Wire –member Marilyn Schreiber submitted an article on beavers this month. Next submission due end of March for the April, May and June edition. Suggested topics to consider: pollinators or vernal pools.

H. 1. Membership – The BOS reappointed members Bob Shabot, Marilyn Schreiber and Kathy Demers for a 3 year term: 12/2/2023 -12/1/2026.

2. Schedule for 2024 – The consensus of members was to continue meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7 pm via Zoom. Calendar will be sent to town clerk.

VIII. Next Meeting: January 17, 2024

IX. Adjournment: The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:59 pm on a motion by C. Jordan/B. Shabot.

Minutes submitted by Kathy Demers, Chairman and secretary pro tem

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TOWN CLERK