

Conservation Commission
Town of Willington
Minutes

Wednesday April 17, 2024 at 7:00 PM
[In-person only at Town Office Building]

- I. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order@7:07 pm by Chairperson Kathy Demers
- II. **Roll Call / Seating of Alternates:** Members present: Carol Jordan, Bob Shabot, Jackie Kulig, Laura Rodriguez and Kathy Demers. Absent members: Marilyn Schreiber, Patty Phillips and Nora Jones.
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by B. Shabot/L. Rodriguez: ***"The minutes of March 20, 2024 be approved with the following correction under Section VII. Old Business, item B. Properties Management: The price paid in June 2023 for a Taylor Pond Guide should be "\$1.55/booklet" rather than "\$1.65/booklet". Motion carried unanimously.***
- IV. **Present to Speak:** none
- V. **Treasurer's Report/Finances:** C. Jordan reported that the current budget balance after encumbrance of \$150 for the library collaboration was \$755.16. Anticipate using approximately \$155 for 100 Taylor Pond Guides, so then balance would be about \$600. *New Expenses:* On 4/15/24, K. Demers purchased 8 folders for the commission from Lots and More at a cost of \$7.92 before taxes. On a motion by C. Jordan/J. Kulig: ***"The commission will refund Kathy Demers \$7.92 for purchasing stationary supplies."*** Ayes: C. Jordan, B. Shabot, J. Kulig, & L. Rodriguez. Abstentions: K. Demers.
C. Jordan noted more reams of paper were needed for trail brochures/maps. On a motion by C. Jordan / L. Rodriguez: ***"The commission will expend funds to purchase 2 reams of paper for trail brochures and maps."*** Motion carried unanimously. It was noted that ARPA 27 funds available to the commission for park/trail maintenance have a current balance of \$3,174.58; must obligate by end of December 31, 2024 and spend by March 31, 2026.
- VI. **Old Business**
 - A. Support for Farmland Protection: The commission would like the Board of Selectmen to consider adopting an ordinance that would give farmers a property tax exemption on farm buildings as allowed by and in accordance with State statutes. According to statute, farmers must have at least \$15,000 in gross sales or losses to qualify. C. Jordan will speak to the Town assessor to get information about how many farmers could potential qualify and what the tax impact might be to the Town. She will also draft language for a potential ordinance based on models used by the towns of Ashford and Mansfield. J. Kulig suggested including a "Right to farm ordinance" and will research what other local towns have done.
 - B. Properties Management
 1. *Fenton-Ruby Park / Drobney Sanctuary*
-Stewards' Reports / Maintenance: Several trees are down on Weigold and Ruby Trails: these will be removed by CC members and volunteers this weekend. K. Demers will meet at FRP with Scout Leader Ken Fluett this weekend to discuss plan for "Boyscout Bridge" repair this year. C. Jordan made more copies of FRP brochure and will include the updated trail map. One hundred Taylor Pond Trail Guides will be ordered. A date for the spring

work day at FRP will be determined and advertised soon based on member's availability. Work will include reblazing trails and repairing some boardwalks.

2. Knowlton Preserve / Talmadge Conservation Tract

- Stewards' Reports/ Maintenance: K. Demers noted that a new boardwalk is needed on the Split Rock Trail to span a wet area. On a motion by B. Shabot/ L. Rodriguez: ***"The commission will use ARPA 27 funds to purchase materials necessary to repair boardwalks at Fenton-Ruby Park as well as to build a new boardwalk on the Split Rock Trail."*** Motion carried unanimously.

- C. Town Development: (PZC; IWWC; ZBA) –B. Shabot noted the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) informally discussed a landowner's request to build on a conservation easement area at 88 Luchon Road in exchange for a land swap of approximately 0.21 acres. Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission (IWWC) will review this request next. The Conservation Commission had informally reviewed the landowner's request last year and decided it was an IWWC matter. At that time a letter was sent to IWWC which included all the research the CC had done regarding the history of the easement and past concerns about the property. K. Demers will resend the letter/ research info to IWWC when the item is posted on their agenda. B. Shabot also noted that PZC discussed that the Roadway Inn off Rte 320 is planning to add a new well and water treatment building to their property in order to meet State mandates about drinking water quality.

D. Collaborative Organization News & Communication:

1. Library: CC member Nora Jones will lead a collaborative hike at Fenton-Ruby Park on June 29th at 10 am.
2. Park and Recreation Dept: The CC will offer a collaborative hike in the fall on one of the town trails off Mason Road. Date and time to be determined.

- E. Regional Pollinator Pathway Initiatives: The Girl Scouts are available to add new plants to the pollinator garden at Fenton-Ruby Park if the commission provides funding. On a motion by B. Shabot/J. Kulig: ***"The commission will expend up to \$100 to purchase flowers and fertilizer for the pollinator garden at Fenton-Ruby Park."*** Motion carried unanimously. C. Jordan noted that Tri-Country Greenhouse has been good to work with in the past. J. Kulig can provide mulch as needed.

F. Open Space Opportunities:

1. Burma Road property: One of the landowners abutting the discontinued portion of Lustig Road is not interested in signing a temporary ROW agreement. Mike D'Amato will speak with our land use attorney to determine if all abutting landowners need to sign the agreement.
2. Historic Parcel on Jared Sparks Road- The commission will contact the landowners to determine their potential interest in selling the 30-acre parcel to the Town so it could be permanently preserved as open space for its historical and natural resource value (forest and stream). K. Demers and B. Shabot will work with the Town historian to draft a letter for the commission's review.

G. Willington Wire – Member L. Rodriguez will write the next article; due end of June for the summer issue.

H. Communications – None reported.

VII. New Business:

Review of Current Open Space and Natural Resource Maps and Documents: The Commission started their review of current documents and maps in anticipation of updating them for the 2028 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

VIII. Next Meeting: May 15, 2024 at 7 pm will be virtual via Zoom

IX. Adjournment: The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:45 pm on a motion by C. Jordan/ B. Shabot.

Minutes submitted by Kathy Demers, Chair and secretary pro tem

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