



TOWN OF THOMPSON

Conservation Commission

815 Riverside Drive - P.O. Box 899
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255
www.thompsonct.org

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES: Monday, November 20th, 2023 - 7 PM
In the 2nd Floor Conference Room @ THOMPSON TOWN HALL
and via Zoom:

1. Call to Order by Judy Rondeau

Members present: Norma O'Leary, Dave Clark, Susan Wheeler, Pat Cheever, Judy Rondeau, Peter Cummins, Carol Smith

Staff: Dan Malo (Agent), Gloria Harvey, Recording Secretary

Guest: Amy St. Onge (First Selectman).

No members of the public were present

2. Review of Minutes

a. October 16th, 2023 – Regular Meeting

Amendments:

#5-Dave Clark didn't go to the Windham Land Trust dinner; he went to the 65 Main meeting.

Dan Malo attended the Windham Land Trust dinner.

2c-Change June 20th approval of Regular Meeting Minutes to September 18th.

Norma O'Leary made a motion to accept the Minutes of October 16, 2023 with amendments, Peter Cummins second the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Financial Matters 26282

Available budget as of 11/16/2023 is \$26,382.84 and expended 33.9% of budget. No expenses listed this month. Renewal of CT Land Conservation Council, CACIWC, CT Audubon, and Wyndham Land Trust memberships are due. Dave Clark made a motion to renew memberships. Norma O'Leary seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Correspondence

- Karen Durlach forwarded correspondence from the Nature Conservancy regarding a Sustainable CT 'Community Resilience Building Workshop'. Dan suggested Thompson should get involved if there is a benefit for the town participating in this, however commitment from other town agencies would be required to implement. The Commission would like to see a presentation, video or fact sheet, and Dan will try to obtain more information. A letter of commitment is required by April 30, 2024.

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- The Eastern Regional Tourism District Marketing Grant is available. It's the grant that the Thompson Historical Society used to create the updated Cemetery Brochure in 2023. Over the next month and a half, Dan will brainstorm potential collaborations and projects. He will try to recruit a partner agency to join us, such as the Thompson Historical Society. The application period closes January 15th, 2024. Mention was made regarding cemetery traffic which is a concern to neighbors and traffic access to cemeteries through private property. Discussion took place if advertising through our website and the brochure have increased cemetery traffic.
- The Town Planner said there is a shortfall of \$8000-\$9000 for legal and acquisition costs related to the purchase of a piece of land from the Butler family for the East Thompson train wreck turntable project on the Airline Trail. She would like to tap into the Open Space Fund to meet that shortfall. In the past the Open Space Fund has been used for legal fees, acquisition costs, survey costs, and attorney fees to review conservation easements. The fund has a balance of approximately \$85,000-\$100,000 and has been at that amount for some time. The fund is seeded by fees-in-lieu of Open Space requirements, which are required for subdivisions of 4 lots or more. Developments have recently been only 3-lot subdivisions, so they don't have to provide open space money or land. The Commissioners liked the idea of preserving the site of the worst train wreck in US history as a memorial, not necessarily as 'Trainwreck Park'. The Commissioners felt that the intention of the fund was to purchase land and asked for more information about the request.
- Dan read Mike St. Lawrence, Windham Land Trust, letter into the record and a copy can be obtained in the Conservation office. The Windham Land Trust wants to use the Open Space Fund to purchase 272 acres of land. Commissioners commented that the Open Space Fund was established for the town to purchase property for itself. They questioned if there was an Ordinance outlining how the money should be spent. Another possibility discussed was to go in with Windham Land Trust where we own a piece of the land, and they own the rest. This approach could solve their problem of acquiring and preserving land while achieving the Town's purpose of the fund. Dan will research to see if there is an ordinance that defines how the money should be spent, and when was the last time the Open Space Fund was used before he asks for the town attorney's opinion.
- The Recreation Commission is hosting Festival of Trees fundraiser as part of the Thompson Winter Market and Bonfire and asked for the Conservation Commission to participate by donating a decorated Christmas Tree to be raffled off. The Commissioners agreed that there was not enough time this year to decorate and donate a Christmas tree, however, will consider it next year.
- CACIWC Conference (Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions) – Dan and Marla attended this conference. The conference highlights included legislative Q&A with Attorneys Janet Brooks and Mark Branse. Dan also attended a module discussing the new Natural Diversity Database program, and their new online reporting and overhauled report process.
- The new FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps became effective September 7th. Dan uploaded a factsheet and instructions to the Wetlands Commission webpage as a 'news' item. The Wetlands Commission is the appeal agency for Building Code decisions and reviews work within the flood areas to ensure that no net loss of flood storage occurs. The program is administered by FEMA and changes to the map and inquiries are generally conducted through them.

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- Dan met on site with Little Pond Improvement Association to discuss the issues they are having with beavers. They are concerned with damage that may occur from the beavers raising the water level. They currently trap during the season (December 1-March 31). They may wish to trap outside of the season, which would require local sign-off for DEEP permitting.
- Last Green Valley meets November 21, 2023—Greg Bugbee from the CT Agricultural Experiment Station will provide an update on the spread of Hydrilla from the Connecticut River into lakes in Eastern Connecticut and throughout the state; presentation will be followed by the results of the Last Green Valley's 2023 water quality monitoring program. The meeting will occur on ZOOM at 9:00 AM.
- Spooky Walk—The Recreation Department held a 'Spooky Walk' at the West Thompson Cemetery on October 27, 2023, as a Walktober event. It was well attended with over 80 registrants. There were some challenges, but otherwise it was a success. The walk was confined to the walkway. A follow up meeting with event partners to discuss and analyze the event is tentatively planned.
- 2024-2029 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan—Dan provided a link for the Commissioners to review or provide comment.
- 'Torrent' newsletter produced by DEEP is available.
- Connecticut GIS Office Inaugural Newsletter is available.
- Land Use Commission Members Training in Putnam on November 27th at the Town Hall regarding Land Use Academy Basic Training which covers legal requirements and procedure roles and responsibilities for Commission members. Duration will be 1 ½ hours. Hosted by NECCOG/CLEAR.

6. **Old Business**

- a. Discussion – 65 Main—On November 9th, ideas regarding the Food Forest/economic incubator were discussed in small groups in the library. Participants drew cards with potential aspects of the project and rated their importance.
- b. Discussion—Long-term Cemetery Maintenance Planning—Tabled to next month in order to have a focused discussion on it.
- c. Discussion—Burial ground at North Grosvenordale Pond—no update to report. Developer has several projects going right now. Dan will reach out to him again.
- d. Discussion—Dangers of Roundup discussed in an article mentioned by one of the Commissioners. A copy of the article will be sent to the Board of Selectmen.

7. **New Business**

- a. Discussion – Commission Bylaws
 - Dan commented that the Commission's bylaws were incorporated in 2005 and have not been

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updated since. The bylaws don't fully reflect the operations of the Commission, so it might be time to update. Dan suggested the Commissioners review the bylaws, make suggestions or comments, and have a discussion on how to modify and update them at a future meeting.

b. Discussion – Wyndham Land Trust/Thompson Open Space fund requests

- Discussed under Correspondence

8. **Citizens' Comment - None**

9. **Members' Forum**

- Invasive plants in conservation easement area-we probably would allow the homeowner to do management, but they have to follow the proper communication channels.
- Bird population was discussed, and a red squirrel was spotted for the first time in years.
- Bernie Davis brought in the 33 blue bird boxes for distribution to board members, volunteers, and town residents.

10. **Announcements**

a. The next scheduled meeting is Monday, December 18th, 2023, at 7 PM.

11. **Adjournment**

After the completion of the agenda, the meeting adjourned by unanimous consent.

To see/hear the entire meeting via ZOOM, copy and paste the following link into your search bar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/tJ5iARYltaJXZ55tiNYo7biM-xZudB6UhkJttmqZLgAH_MrWEFTVCxHgg841V4.98tiWi5dQwM4DrK?startTime=1700524656000

Passcode: ##uqp#m9

Disclaimer: These minutes have not yet been approved by the Inland Wetlands Commission. Please refer to the next meeting's minutes for approval of, and/or amendments to these minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Harvey

Gloria Harvey, Recording Secretary