

Beacon Falls Conservation Commission
10 Maple Ave.
Beacon Falls, CT 06403



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
August 5, 2013
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

Commissioners present: Mike Bouchard, Chris Wilemski, Michael Opuszynski, Jeff Kean

Commissioners absent: Secretary Tanya Gutierro, Vice Chairman Noralie D'Amico

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Minutes – June 3, 2013

Motion to accept the June 3, 2013 meeting minutes: **Bouchard/Opuszynski**; all aye.

J. Kean arrived after this motion was made.

4. Correspondence

- Thank you memos sent on July 2, 2013 to Peter Jezierny and Craig Stevens of the Seymour Public Works department for placing boulders and construction blocks at Lantern Ridge to protect the trails.
C. Wilemski made a correction on the letterhead template that he was not the Commission secretary.
- 7 copies of CACIWC Spring 2013 newsletters
- Note with finance form from First Selectman Gerard Smith re any deficits in your department in FY 12-13 requiring transfers need to be submitted by 6/26
- June 11, 2013 letter from Christopher Martin, Director/State Forester, CT DEEP, to Joe Roderigo who left it for Rich Minnick about seeking volunteer landowners to host Emerald Ash Borer sink sites and having the affected trees girdled by the end of June; it's too late to act on at this time of year
M. Opuszynski suggested submitting an article to the Citizen's News next spring seeking property owners to volunteer their trees be studied. This information could also be posted on the Conservation Commission web site.
- July-Aug Audubon magazine
- budget status report
- Summer 2013 DEEP newsletter

- CLEARscapes newsletter from UCONN

5. Membership Update

- Code of Ethics documents
- 36th Annual CACIWA Meeting and Environmental Conference – November 16th, no location yet

6. 2013-2014 Budget

\$1,298 approved for clerical fees and
\$2,000 for operating expenses
\$500 for land acquisition fund remains in the budget

Discussion about current ordinance which calls for creating open space preservation fund. A suggestion was made to transfer any monies remaining in the Conservation Commission budget at the end of the fiscal year to a fund designated for land acquisition. A request would need to be sent to the Board of Selectmen for approval of any transfer, and then forwarded to Board of Finance for approval.

7. Land Use Committee

- Conservation Commission membership – D. Betkoski recommended that the Conservation Commission send a representative to the Land Use Committee, no further information was available on their meeting schedule.

D. Betkoski volunteered to be the primary Conservation Commission representative to the Land Use Committee to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

M. Opuszynski volunteered to be the Conservation Commission alternate representative.

J. Kean abstained due to a conflict of interest.

The Land Use Committee meetings allow boards to speak to each other and to review land use projects together, which would then go to the individual boards for approval. These are public meetings; everyone may attend.

Motion to request that the Board of Selectmen appoint Diane Betkoski as primary and Mike Opuszynski as alternate Conservation Commission representatives to the Land Use Committee: **Opuszynski/Bouchard**; all aye.

- Gobbler's Ridge Project
M. Opuszynski suggested having an access point from Burton Road.
The commissioners reviewed of the map of the development.

M. Opuszynski suggested the developer should offer usable land to the town, not just a donation of a vernal pool area which cannot be developed or used.

D. Betkoski commented that the donated parcels of property may not fit into the Conservation Commission open space plan if the pieces are not accessible or desirable for public use. She stressed that the Conservation Commission should create a wish list of properties to purchase should they become available using the Land Acquisition Fund. The State of CT requires that developers donate a percentage of land they are developing for open space to the town. D. Betkoski noted that it is written that the town has the option of a cash payment from the developer.

C. Wilemski asked how the Conservation Commission would decide on accepting the land versus the monetary equivalent. He questioned how a value is put on the open space property earmarked to be donated to the town.

D. Betkoski commented that land development plans should be looked at on a case by case basis, and determine if the donated land is useful and accessible.

M. Opuszynski suggested walking the Gobbler Ridge property to see what is there and how best to control traffic around the vernal pool. He suggested it would be a good field trip for Laurel Ledge students use for a nature walk.

J. Kean suggested a developer give the town something more useful than an open space parcel with a vernal pool which is protected and cannot be built on anyway.

C. Wilemski commented that the unusable land should not be counted as part of the percentage required by the state to be donated to the town. He suggested a mix donation of land and cash from the developer.

ACTION: M. Bouchard will contact Bruce Loomis of the Bethany Conservation Commission regarding his experience with land donated from developers.

D. Betkoski commented that the Conservation Commission has the prerogative to determine if there is interest in the parcel of land donated to the town from this building project and not always accept what is given.

C. Wilemski commented that this may set a precedent of turning down a piece of donated property because it doesn't fit into the Conservation Commission's open space plan.

Following a lengthy discussion about open space, the Conservation Commission will make a further assessment and evaluation of the property.

- Ordinance Creating an Open Space Preservation Fund
D. Betkoski referenced the ordinance creating an open space preservation fund and receiving a cash donation from a developer in lieu of a land donation to help build this fund.

J. Kean departed at 7:56.

8. Open Space Management

- Lantern Ridge Project –
- Dave D’Amico is working on coordinating the wood chipping.
- Need to set a date to open the property to the public and will need to publicize.
- **ACTION:** M. Opuszynski took photos and will send them to C. Wilemski to post on the Conservation Commission web site.
- Work to be done: put signage up; will need help digging post holes, post some signs on trees.
- **ACTION:** M. Bouchard will contact Dave D’Amico about putting in some sign posts.
- C. Wilemski asked if anything legal needs to be done before the parcel is opened to the public. D. Betkoski noted that the fire marshal approved the emergency access; the Board of Selectmen receive the meeting minutes.
- Possible dates for on site work: Saturdays: August 24 & Sept 14; Sept 21 as a rain date
- Set opening date for parcel at the September meeting
- M. Opuszynski suggested an agenda item for the September meeting: to review existing open space maps and to discuss creating a land purchase wish list.

9. Outreach Planning

- Library Book purchase - made
- Website update – NTR; M. Opuszynski will send his Lantern Ridge photos to C. Wilemski.

10. Payment of Invoice

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville’s invoice requesting payment of \$80.00 for the June 3, 2013 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Opuszynski/Bouchard; all aye.

11. Announcements/Adjournment

The next meeting will be held on Monday, September 9, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.

C. Wilemski noted that the state installed a fish ladder in Seymour; he asked if any type of invasive fish can also come up the ladder and go into the river. He suggested keeping an eye out for that possibility.

M. Bouchard commented that he assumed the state looked into that as this project had been studied for years.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 PM: Bouchard/ Opuszynski; all aye.

The next meeting will be Monday September 9, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

CC:
Conservation Commission members
Board of Selectmen
Planning & Zoning
Inland Wetlands
Park & Rec Commissions