

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



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
November 4, 2013
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

Commissioners present: Vice Chairman Noralie D'Amico, Jeff Kean, Chris Wilemski, Mike Bouchard via Skype, Michael Opuszynski (arrived at 6:47)

Commissioner absent: Secretary Tanya Gutierro

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Minutes – October 7, 2013

Motion to accept the October 7, 2013 meeting minutes: D'Amico/Kean; all aye.
C. Wilemski abstained as he was not at the October 7, 2013 meeting.

4. Correspondence

- Nov-Dec 2013 Audubon magazine
- Thank you note from Lori Mylan for sympathy card
- Budget status report as of 10/31/13
- Fall 2013 CACIWC newsletter
- Invoice for land ordinance work from Byrne & Byrne, Law Offices
- CT Arborist newsletter from CT Tree Protective Association

5. Membership Update

- Code of Ethics documents – T. Gutierro verbally notified D. Betkoski that she had received and signed her ethics form. D. Betkoski will confirm it was received.
- CACIWC Annual Conference Nov. 16 – T. Gutierro, M. Opuszynski & D. Betkoski will attend.
- Conservation Commission Ordinance
D. Betkoski reminded the commissioners of the training requirement as stated in ordinance. She suggested looking for meetings or seminars of interest if the CACIWC annual conference was not viable.
The commissioners reviewed the ordinance establishing the Conservation Commission to ensure compliance.

D. Betkoski commented on section 3.0 regarding the Terms of office: 6 years for each commissioner. She was concerned as she had been on the Conservation Commission for 7 years.

C. Wilemski pointed out the previous line stated “There shall be no prohibition against successive terms of such appointed members.”

Discussion:

D. Betkoski expressed her concern about possibly losing members and the commission’s momentum when an individual’s term expires.

N. D’Amico commented that unless someone expressed an interest to be on the commission and there were no vacancies would anyone be asked to step down, otherwise she saw no need to have anyone leave after a 6 year term.

C. Wilemski commented that the makeup of the Conservation Commission would ultimately be up to the Board of Selectman to make the appointments. Any term beyond 6 years conforms with the ordinance.

J. Kean agreed that unless there was someone who wanted to be on the commission, that those on the board can remain.

ACTION: Clerk Martha Melville will check with the Town Clerk’s office for more accurate term dates for commissioners and request that they be staggered so as not to lose all members at the same time.

It was also noted that according the ordinance, officers are elected for 2 years with the next elections to be held in January 2015.

6. 2013-2014 Budget Update

D. Betkoski noted that the 2013-14 budget had a balance of \$2,006.80 which includes \$500 in the land acquisition fund line plus \$1,069.25 in the clerk line.

7. Land Use Committee no activity/meetings

8. Open Space Management

- Lantern Ridge Event – Chair Betkoski expressed her thanks to everyone for their help on the successful ribbon cutting event. She noted that First Selectman Smith recognized Lantern Ridge in his November monthly newsletter on the town web site. She shared that she received kudos on this project from other officials in town.

C. Wilemski noted that he loaded photos on web site from Lantern Ridge ribbon cutting ceremony.

D. Betkoski commented that for additional publicity, photos can be submitted to the Citizen's News.

M. Opuszynski offered to put together a DVD of photos on the Lantern Ridge project.

J. Kean commented that he has photo of the ribbon cutting suitable for publishing in the Citizen's News.

N. D'Amico commented on the good turnout for the ribbon cutting.

J. Kean concurred that he had also received positive reviews on the event.

M. Opuszynski shared that he heard good reviews of people using the trails.

- Discussion of Open Space Inventory –

D. Betkoski noted that currently there are fragmented pieces and the commission should consider what the future goals are and to continue to plan on how to connect existing open space parcels.

- Update on Open Space Policy –

D. Betkoski sought legal advice about the ordinance and confirmed that it was in compliance with state statutes. In the past neither Planning & Zoning nor the Conservation Commission requested money in lieu of a donation of land from developers. It is valid to request money instead of land.

Noting this legal opinion, D. Betkoski requested that First Selectman Smith notify other boards (specifically P&Z) to notify prospective developers that they may be asked for a monetary donation rather than a piece of land.

Land acquisition fund needs to be legally protected in budget so town can't touch it. Money is protected by virtue of the state statute. J. Kean suggested transferring the land acquisition funds out of the town's operational budget and into a separate account.

C. Wilemski commented that the Board of Selectmen would have to approve any transfer. The land acquisition fund could be used for appraisals on land from a developer to come up with a value of the land for a monetary donation.

J. Kean suggested having the developer pay the full appraisal up front and once it goes through the Conservation Commission would reimburse half to them. He

added that the commission should request monies for the land acquisition fund each year.

9. Planning for 2014

D. Betkoski requested the commissioners review their 2013 goals and develop goals for 2014 including any ideas from CACIWC conference. She provided examples such as doing outreach to the community about conservation and education; sharing information via the CC web site; and having speakers at meetings, but noted that attendance is limited.

Tabled until the December 2 meeting

10. Payment of Invoice

Invoice of \$750.00 for legal review of land ordinance from Byrne & Byrne, Law Offices: **ACTION:** D. Betkoski will contact First Selectman Smith and request that the Byrne & Byrne bill be covered under the town's legal budget line item.

Motion to approve payment of \$750.00 invoice from Byrne & Byrne, Law Offices for legal review of land ordinance pending authorization to draw from the town's legal budget line item: Opuszynski/Wilemski; all aye.

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$65.00 for the October 7, 2013 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Wilemski/D'Amico; all aye.

11. Announcements/Adjournment

The next meeting will be held on Monday, December 2, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 PM: Opuszynski/D'Amico; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

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