

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



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
December 2, 2013
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order

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

Commissioners present: Vice Chairman Noralie D'Amico, Secretary Tanya Gutierro Chris Wilemski, Mike Bouchard, Jeff Kean (departed at 8:00)

Commissioner absent: Michael Opuszynski

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Minutes – November 4, 2013

Motion to accept the November 4, 2013 meeting minutes: **Bouchard/D'Amico**; all aye.
T. Gutierro abstained as she was not at the November 4, 2013 meeting.

4. Correspondence

- Announcement from CT Land Conservation Council on their annual conference to be held at Wesleyan University, Middletown on March 15, 2014
- budget status report as of 11/25/13
- flyer from Hull Forest Products about woodland management with a note from Chris Bielak attached – consulting foresters to give free consultation, potential income producing effort.
Discussion: J. Kean commented that from his experiences, these companies can make a big mess on the property after they strip the land of wood. M. Bouchard & N. D'Amico concurred. Based upon member comments and based upon the evaluation from the ERT study, D. Betkoski suggested Lantern Ridge pass on this offer from Hull Forest Products for free consultative services.
- D. Betkoski shared information about Bioblitz, a 24 event where scientists and the public count and record as many species as possible that can be found in a given area. Plants, fish, insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals will all be included. Planned for May 2015 in Matthies Park & Naugatuck State Forest.
- US Fish & Wildlife Service: US fishery report
- DEEP sent out grant applications for acquiring town open space. These would require an open space plan in order to be eligible and may also require matching funds.

5. Membership Update

- Code of Ethics document – all members have completed
- Conservation Commission Ordinance – proposed staggered terms

Current members all have an end of term date of 2015, D. Betkoski suggested amending the ordinance to include staggering the terms

Theoretically, all the terms should expire in 2018 since the commission was established in 2006. The first set of commissioner's terms would have expired in 2012, then 2018 not 2015 as is on the current roster.

Change to ordinance, new members will start with a 6-year term, not filling the unexpired portion of a term.

Motion to change the language of Ordinance Establishing Conservation Commission, Section 5.0 Vacancies from "shall be filled for the un-expired portion of said term" to "shall be filled for a new 6-year term": **Kean/Bouchard**; all aye.

D. Betkoski also noted that the Town Clerk will need to change the term expiration dates of the current commissioners to 2018.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will email the Board of Selectmen with these recommendations for ordinance change and term date changes.

- CACIWC Annual Conference report – held November 16

D. Betkoski, T. Gutierro & M. Opuszynski attended the conference workshops.

T. Gutierro commented that she had spoken with one of the speakers about bamboo invasive species and how quickly it gets out of hand, is hard to control, it must be hand pulled to eradicate and that there is regulation but lacks enforcement.

D. Betkoski commented on the keynote speaker whose subject was the 100-year celebration of CT state parks which includes 107 state parks 32 state forests. The value of open space, as an economic driver, and the importance of educating the public on the value of open space to the community rather than just developing the land.

D. Betkoski also noted that there is an increase demand for agricultural open space to farm the land.

An attorney spoke about conservation commissions having an advisory capacity for future decisions and making recommendations, conducting public workshops, raising awareness, and maintaining open space inventory.

6. 2013-2014 Budget Update

November YTD, \$500 balance in land acquisition line item and \$1,507 balance remains in expenses and \$1,004 balance remains in clerical fees.

7. Land Use Committee no activity/meetings

8. Open Space Management

- Open Space Land Ordinance Update - accepting money in lieu of a parcel of land from developers.

D. Betkoski updated the Board of Selectmen via email and learned the Conservation Commission has their full support for sending out communications to other boards and commissions about this option.

Discussion:

Questions raised:

- *how is property given to the Conservation Commission?*
- *is it in perpetuity?*
- *how is open space accepted? Need clarification*
- *will a donated property have marked boundaries?*
- *is a deed for town open space such as Lantern Ridge?*
- *would the developer would manage the land until it is turned over to*
- *the town?*

Suggestion of adding language to the Open Space ordinance about gifted or donated properties to include “the responsibility for and the manner of the marking (cost and physical marking) of boundaries will be determined by the Conservation Commission.”

Recommended no change at this time to the Open Space ordinance.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will email P&Z and inquire what the procedure is for current marking of a donated open space parcel. What was the guidance before the 2007 ordinance?

Jeff Kean (departed at 8:00)

9. **2014 Goals**

D. Betkoski reviewed the 2013 goals and what the Conservation Commission had accomplished.

Discussion of potential 2014 goals:

- *Reviewing and update Open Space Preservation Fund and Conservative Commission ordinance to clarify processes*
- *Work more actively with P&Z in reviewing development and other projects*
- *Continue to increase Conservation Commission membership knowledge of conservation matters and their legal and procedural workings*
- *Update open space inventory and ensure property is preserved in perpetuity*
- *Create a plan to connect existing properties and identify future properties to acquire*
- *Define maintenance needs and responsibility of open space (e.g. Lantern Ridge)*
- *Conduct Outreach Activities to educate Conservation Commission members, other boards and commissions as well as the public on such topics as: recycling, rain gardens, use of pesticides, air quality; by inviting speakers to meetings; sponsoring events like trail hikes with a focus, invasive plant pulls, bark peels for ash borer*

C. Wilemski noted the vast array of areas the Conservation Commission encompasses based on discussions covered at this meeting ranging from legal boundaries of donated land to invasive bugs and plant species.

10. Payment of Invoices

- Status of attorney invoice –
The \$750.00 invoice from Byrne & Byrne, Law Offices for legal review of land ordinance was covered under the town's legal budget line item.

- Clerical invoice
Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$76.25 for the November 4, 2013 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Bouchard/D'Amico; all aye.

11. Announcements/Adjournment

D. Betkoski wished everyone on the Conservation Commission happy holidays.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, January 6, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville

Clerk

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