

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



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
May 5, 2014
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM.

Commissioners present: Mike Bouchard, Chris Wilemski, Michael Opuszynski, Secretary Tanya Gutierro

Commissioner absent: Jeff Kean

Others present: Michelle Schwenger, Olivia Schwenger, Rich Minnick arrived at 7:13

2. Approval of Minutes – March 3, 2014

Note: The April 7, 2014 meeting was cancelled due to lack of quorum.

Motion to accept the March 3, 2014 meeting minutes: Bouchard/Opuszynski; all aye.

3. Correspondence

- Notice of Intent from DEEP dated 1/16/14, to eliminate 60 day waiting period for general permit applicants

M. Opuszynski explained that I&W never received it. He will bring it to their next meeting.

Motion to rearrange agenda and move up agenda item #4 to accommodate Girl Scout visitors: Bouchard/Opuszynski; all aye.

- Audubon membership 3 year renewal – D. Betkoski informed the commissioners that she renewed the Audubon membership for 3 years for \$70.
- CACIWC Habitat, Spring 2014 newsletter

4. Comments from the Public

Girl Scout interest in Lantern Ridge – Mike Opuszynski

Michelle Schwenger, troop leader and Olivia Schwenger member of Beacon Falls Brownie Girl Scout Troop 67821 explained that their troop has offered to volunteer to help clean up Lantern Ridge on a periodic basis, perhaps every other week, which would include collecting garbage on the trail and clear trails of any obstructions.

M. Opuszynski recommended once a month for clearing and trash pickup, would suffice, during spring, summer and fall.

M. Bouchard requested that if they see something dangerous on the trails or if there is something that needs to be removed to inform M. Opuszynski who will convey to the commissioners.

Chair D. Betkoski expressed her thanks for the Girl Scout troop's offer and that this would be a great way to enjoy nature and help out the Conservation Commission. She added that a photo of the girls doing this cleanup work could be submitted to the local newspaper and/or be posted on the Conservation Commission web site as a way to recognize their efforts.

M. Schwenger will coordinate a schedule with M. Opuszynski who will inform the Conservation Commission.

Motion to purchase garbage bags and gloves for the Girl Scout troop to use during Lantern Ridge clean up: **Opuszynski/Bouchard**; all aye.

ACTION: Chair D. Betkoski instructed M. Opuszynski to purchase the needed supplies for the Girl Scout cleanup effort and submit a receipt for reimbursement at their June meeting.

5. Membership Update

- Resignation of Vice Chair N. D'Amico effective March 16, 2014; Chair D. Betkoski accepted with regrets. The Board of Selectmen was aware of this vacancy.

Chair D. Betkoski opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair pro tem until elections in January 2015

Motion to nominate Mike Bouchard as Vice Chair pro tem: **Betkoski/Gutierro**;
No discussion

M. Bouchard accepted the nomination; all aye.

- CACIWC Annual Conference report – held November 16
D. Betkoski forwarded links for the presentations from this conference to commission members.

ACTION: M. Opuszynski will present his comments on the vernal pools and rain gardens workshop at the June 2 meeting.

- Dedicated email account for Chair – complete DBetkoski@townofbeaconfalls.com Or ccchair@townofbeaconfalls.com

6. 2014 Goals

- Developing action plans – distributed to commissioners
- Goal 1.b. Set up interest bearing account for land acquisition budgeted dollars: has been completed through the Board of Selectmen and Town Treasurer Mike Krenesky.
- Goal 1. d. Attend Finance Committee meeting to update/educate members on the economic benefits of open space: M. Opuszynski attended meeting and D. Betkoski thanked him for that.
- Goal 2. a. Consider appointing a P&Z liaison to the Conservation Commission or CC to P&Z to enhance communication: *Discussion: inquire if anyone on the current P&Z commission would consider filling the vacancy on the CC.*
- Goal 2. b. Work through Land Use Committee and P&Z to develop guidelines in acquiring land or funds: D. Betkoski received emails from P&Z Chair Joe Fitzpatrick about setting up a meeting with Attorney Byrne.
- Goal 6. a. Develop a checklist of maintenance to determine ongoing labor/costs for update: M. Opuszynski explained that he and J. Kean had each come up with concepts and will present them at the June 3 Conservation Commission meeting.

7. Budget Update

D. Betkoski confirmed that the CC \$500 land acquisition fund balance was deposited into a separate interest bearing account.

M. Opuszynski mentioned that he attended a Board of Finance meeting and when the issue of land acquisition was raised, he thanked the BOF for supporting the Conservation Commission's request for \$500 in the 2014-15 budget.

M. Bouchard asked where the bank statements for this new account would be sent. D. Betkoski responded that they will go to the Town Treasurer. M. Bouchard requested an annual statement be sent to the Conservation Commission in order to keep tabs on the account.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will request a copy of the statement for the Conservation Commission Land Acquisition Fund from the Town Treasurer which should include the formal name of the account.

Current Conservation Commission budget balance is about \$1,400. Discussion about purchasing additional marketing items and books for the library.

D. Betkoski suggested allocating \$300 for books.

ACTION: Clerk M. Melville will ask Library Director Sue Dowdell to research a book

purchase on behalf of the Conservation Commission and a decision will be made at the June 3 meeting.

8. Land Use Committee

- Communication with Land Use Committee Chair – request for meeting to discuss P&Z procedures pertaining to conservations land/fee
Chair D. Betkoski has been emailing with Joe Fitzpatrick about setting a date for a meeting with Attorney Byrne.

P&Z liaison, it was suggested to ask if anyone on the P&Z would like to be on the Conservation Commission and fill the role of P&Z liaison.

- Guest: R. Minnick to discuss open space matter

Chair D. Betkoski welcomed Rich Minnick, Beacon Falls Steward Land Use/Open Space to the meeting.

M. Bouchard asked R. Minnick if he knew anything about the town purchasing any land on North Main St: He indicated that from his understanding that was already town or state property for the greenway.

R. Minnick noted that one house on Nancy Street on which back taxes were owed was turned over to the town and would be used as part of River Bend.

He added that there had been a request to make River Bend handicap accessible, but was determined not feasible.

D. Betkoski questioned how towns, land use committees and/or commissions acquire property and how decisions are made, who manages this land and if all committees follow the same guidelines.

R. Minnick commented that the Conservation Commission took first step by setting up a land acquisition fund for open space and that this commission was established to protect open space. He added that the Land Use Committee was set up to protect areas and get input from other committees.

D. Betkoski noted that based on state statutes the Conservation Commission can accept fees in lieu of land from developers. All developments start at P&Z, which is the authoritarian body to approve any developments plans. She stressed the need for guidelines and consistent procedures, as well as notification to the Conservation Commission about any pending developments.

R. Minnick expressed his frustration that he cannot get a quorum together for a land use committee meeting to discuss these issues as some boards/commissions haven't identified a point of contact.

M. Bouchard asked how to move forward to building the land acquisition fund and stressed the need to keep the Conservation Commission in the loop when developers go to I&W and P&Z.

The subject of deeds to the town for open space was discussed, not all land parcels have deeds signed over to the town.

D. Betkoski asked M. Opuszynski, as the I&W liaison, to keep the Conservation Commission apprised of any new developments brought before I&W.

D. Betkoski noted that the Conservation Commission can work on updating the Town's Open Space inventory as well as tracking down deeds to open space parcels and checking to ensure these deeds state that properties are preserved in perpetuity.

Chair D. Betkoski expressed her thanks to R. Minnick for attending this meeting.

- Lantern Ridge – Archery hunting inquiry

R. Minnick has passed along an inquiry to Chair D. Betkoski regarding activities on the Lantern Ridge property. She responded that based upon an environmental review and guidelines established by the conservation commission, hunting and archery are prohibited. Activities are limited to passive recreation.

9. Open Space Management

- Open Space Inventory & Future Planning

10. Outreach Activities

- Earth Day – Citizen's News - done

- Duck Race/RiverFest - May 3

Chair D. Betkoski expressed thanks to T. Gutierro and her son Marco for tending the Conservation Commission booth and to C. Wilemski for taking pictures at the event. Many compasses, magnets and bags were handed out.

- Recycling Efforts – Joe Rodorigo investigated single stream recycling suggested the Conservation Commission look into this. Chair D. Betkoski indicated the commissioners had a full plate with the current goals.
Discussion ensued; consensus was this wasn't a Conservation Commission issue.

11. **Payment of Invoices**

- Clerical invoice

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$95.00 for the March 3, 2014 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Opuszynski/Gutierro; all aye.

- Reimbursement for keys

Motion to accept Chair Diane Betkoski's invoice requesting payment of \$13.40 for the reimbursement of keys for the Conservation Commission filing cabinet in the assembly room and pay the bill as submitted: Opuszynski/Wilemski; all aye.

12. **Announcements/Adjournment**

The next meeting will be held on Monday, June 2, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 PM: Opuszynski/Wilemski; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

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