

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



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Monthly Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2015
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM.

Commissioners present: Vice Chairman Mike Bouchard, Secretary Sophie Zyla, Tanya Gutierro, Michael Opuszynski

Commissioner absent: Jeff Kean

Others present: Lori Paradis Brant

Chairman D. Betkoski added to this agenda:

Review of 2014 Goals/2015 Goals under 6. Budget Update
Facebook/Social Media Presence under 9. Outreach Activities

2. Approval of Minutes – January 5, 2015

Motion to accept the January 5, 2015 meeting minutes as presented:

Bouchard/Opuszynski; all aye. *T. Gutierro abstained as she was not at the January 5, 2015 meeting.*

3. Correspondence -

- budget status as of 12/31/14
- Mar-Apr 2015 Audubon magazine
- Soil & Water SW Conservation District Fall 2014 newsletter
- NVS&L statement dated 12/31/14
- Winter 2015 CT DEEP newsletter
- February 6 email from Rich Minnick concerning the state expanding the bottle bill, reducing plastic bags, funding open space
- email forwarded from First Selectman Chris Bielik from CT DEEP grant for natural heritage, open space, water shed land; application deadline has passed

D. Betkoski reiterated the importance of developing a plan of open space and once a plan is in place the Conservation Commission can be proactive and take advantage of grant opportunities.

M. Opuszynski suggested designating someone or creating a subcommittee to be responsible for researching possible grants and keeping track of requirements and deadlines.

- copy of a letter from Mike Opuszynski, Chairman Land Use Committee to First Selectman Chris Bielik re comments and concerns on the proposed Tiverton Development

- Aquarion Water nominations notice for honoring volunteers; award deadline May 6

D. Betkoski agreed with the suggestion of creating a Recognition and Grant Review Subcommittee to oversee grant applications; to be discussed further at the April meeting

4. Comments from the Public - none

5. Membership Update -

- Volunteer/Sub-committee member Bonnie Chiaverelli

She has interested in attending meetings and helping out, has experience on boards in Derby.

- Recommended member Lori Paradis Brant - attended meeting; gave a brief bio: currently works for non-profit environmental education career, worked for Stepping Stones museum, DEEP, CT Audubon, presently works at CT Forest & Park Association

6. Budget Update

- Variance Report for January

Received a request from the Board of Selectmen to submit the Conservation Commission's 2015-2016 budget. D. Betkoski noted that the town budget process review was just beginning.

- Land Acquisition bank account

Received a corrected bank statement dated 12/31/14 showing a \$1,000 balance; previous fees were reimbursed

- 2015-2016 Budget Submission

D. Betkoski shared with the commissioners the 2015-2016 budget and 5-year budget projection submitted to the Board of Selectmen with a 3% annual increase to the Clerk and Expenses line items and increases to the Land Acquisition line item.

- Review of 2014 goals:

D. Betkoski reviewed and provided status of the Conservation Commission's 2014 Goals:

- update ordinance & clarify processes; waiting for P&Z to update their process to include the Conservation Commission to be actively

- involved in new developments
- open space preservation fund: successfully established, and named consistently in the ordinance
- update open space inventory and confirm the deed states it is for in perpetuity; checking for consistency with wording in deeds
- develop plan to identify future properties to purchase

M. Opuszynski asked if the Board of Selectmen had agreed that all open space parcels listed in the open space inventory are deeded to the Conservation Commission and if not, how to economically change the deeds

S. Zyla suggested using quick claim deeds to solve this issue.

- defining maintenance needs for open space parcels
- conduct outreach activities: recycling, RiverFest attendance

- Potential 2015 goals:

M. Opuszynski suggested having a WRHS student representative attend Conservation Commission meetings to help get some student involvement and start conservation efforts at the school.

S. Zyla commented that she was working on presentations to give at area high school through the Valley Audubon group explaining the group and how they can help, and provided focused activities for students.

- * establish a student volunteer position on the Conservation Commission
- * get approval and ratification of updated ordinance
- * establish subcommittees:
 - Land Use
 - Recognition & Grants
 - Open Space Inventory
- * Outreach/education can include publicizing what the Conservation Commission does and inform the community; consider starting a blog that the student representative could oversee

S. Zyla shared a brochure she created about litter which the Conservation Commission could use with their logo

D. Betkoski emphasized the importance of keeping the CC web site up to date.

M. Opuszynski suggesting offering an invasive species talk, open to public, and advertise in newspapers.

D. Betkoski asked everyone to think of other topics of interest.

M. Opuszynski asked what the definition of passive recreation was in the ordinance;
D. Betkoski noted that it needs to be clarified.

D. Betkoski added that target dates need to be assigned to the 2015 goals.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will invite chair of P&Z to a future CC meeting

7. Land Use Committee Report

M. Opuszynski reported that at the January 8 meeting the Tiverton Development was discussed and each commission gave a report

M. Bouchard commented that all boards need to be represented at these meetings

The next Land Use Committee meeting will be held on March 25.

8. Open Space Management

- Open Space Preservation Fund - Ordinance Update - Status Report
- Open Space Deeds - Status Report - nothing to report
- Open Space Inventory & Future Planning - Subcommittee Report

M. Bouchard noted that there is a special form to fill out to change a town ordinance.

9. Outreach Activities

- Website update- site administration information was passed on to S. Zyla
- Recycling Project - discussion of disseminating the informational brochure created by S. Zyla
- Citizen's News - Conservation Awareness articles

M. Opuszynski reported that he contacted the editor of Citizen's News and was told that there was no space available for a regular Conservation Corner series of articles but suggested writing letters to the editor.

M. Opuszynski suggested partnering with other town Conservation Commissions to offer joint presentations to increase attendance and awareness.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will contact the Prospect Conservation Commission to begin a dialogue.

ACTION: M. Opuszynski will write an article about the timeline breakdown of trash for publication in April.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will write an article on the environmental impact of cigarette butts.

- Riverfest/Duck Race - Saturday May 9: recycling theme
have giveaways: magnets and hiking bags
suggested showing a poster of what is recyclable and what isn't
- L. Brant suggested having a recycle challenge: a competition of sorting recycling versus trash; interview the winners for a future newspaper article
- M. Opuszynski will check on the Girl Scout troop to see if they can attend and bring attention to their cleanup efforts at Lantern Ridge.
- Facebook/Social Media presence - D. Betkoski shared an email from the First Selectman about using social media to disseminate information; the Conservation Commission will be allowed to have a Facebook page.

10. **Projects of Interest**

- Towantic Hill Power Plant - no updates

S. Zyla reported that she had attending meetings on behalf of the Valley Audubon as an intervener. She noted that species inventories were done, no environmental impact report was found, the Town of Middlebury had filed a suit with Supreme Court; March 12 is next meeting

The Towantic Hill Power Plant must be built by 2018; it will run on gas/oil which is not green energy.

S. Zyla added that CT doesn't need power, it would help New England and it could be built anywhere in New England.

- Bethany Development - no application

11. **Payment of Invoices** -

- Clerical invoice –
Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$80.00 for the January 5, 2015 session and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Gutierro/Zyla; all aye.

12. **Announcements/Adjournment**

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 6, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:59 PM: Opuszynski/Bouchard; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

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