

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



**BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**Monthly Meeting Minutes**  
**April 6, 2015**  
**(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)**

**1. Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:39 PM.

Commissioners present: Secretary Sophie Zyla, Michael Opuszynski, Lori Paradis Brant

Commissioner absent: Vice Chairman Mike Bouchard, Tanya Gutierro, Jeff Kean

Others present: Bonnie Chevarella, Ruth Burritt

D. Betkoski introduced the guests who attended in response to notice posted in the Citizen's News seeking volunteers and potential commissioners.

Bonnie Chevarella shared that she is a social worker and works with the elderly. She was involved in politics in Derby serving on various boards.

Ruth Burritt shared that she has no political background, is an insurance agent, IT profession and bookkeeper. She is originally from Norwalk and moved to Beacon Falls 7 years ago. She added that she loves the outdoors and environmental beauty.

**2. Approval of Minutes – March 2, 2015 - tabled**

*Due to a lack of quorum the March 2, 2015 minutes could not be accepted.*

**3. Correspondence -**

- Soil and Water Spring 2015 newsletter from SW Conservation District
- received CT Land Conservation Council Enews - March 31, 2015 via email
- S. Zyla shared a flyer from the Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society offering a Young Naturalists Program of Vernal Pool Explorations on Saturday April 11 at 9 AM in Matthies Park which she will lead.

**4. Comments from the Public -**

Invited Guest - P&Z Chair, Kevin McDuffie - unable to attend

**5. Membership Update -**

- Appointment of Lori Paradis Brant - Chairman D. Betkoski gave her congratulations on being appointed to the commission.

- Volunteer/Sub-committee member Bonnie Chevarella - Chairman D. Betkoski welcomed her to the meeting
- Member Responsibilities - Chairman D. Betkoski reviewed the expectations that commissioners attend meetings regularly and prepared and follow through on assignments. Per the town ordinance commissioners are required to be involved in continuing education by attending seminars and/or workshops once a year (paid for by the Conservation Commission) and keeping up with readings that may be sent out.

**ACTION:** L. Brant volunteered to gather the dates of upcoming conferences and workshops and will send it to the other commissioners.

## 6. **Budget Update**

- Variance Report through 3/31/15 spent \$435 from clerk line item and \$288 under miscellaneous  
Chairman D. Betkoski submitted proposed budget for FY 2015-2016, no feedback yet
- Land Acquisition account - to purchase open space and use for surveying as needed  
B. Chevarella asked if the Conservation Commission does fundraising.  
Chairman D. Betkoski responded saying no the Conservation Commission is solely funded by the town and pointed out the Conservation Commission can request developers pay a fee in lieu of donating an open space parcel of land.

## 7. **2015 Goals Review**

1. Update Ordinances: the following suggestions were made:

- updating town ordinance for Conservation Commission to include a student representative and possibly alternate member(s)
- have two students attend the meetings; identify two student representatives and two alternates
- creating an Open Space Preservation Fund Ordinance as recommended by the land attorney
- Work with P&Z to implement their process changes recommended by the land attorney

**ACTION:** Chairman D. Betkoski will request that the Board of Finance make the budget line item description consistent with the name of open space land acquisition fund.

2. Establish sub-committees to provide concentrated focus and effort on key initiatives:

- Land Use - ensure wording on deeds include "in perpetuity" and that the parcel is for passive recreation (D. Betkoski and M. Opuszynski will take lead)
- Recognition and grants - to keep track of what's available and the deadlines (D. Betkoski will lead)

**ACTION:** R. Burritt volunteered to post recognition and grant information on the Conservation Commission web site; please email data to her

- Open Space Inventory (and Natural Resource Inventory) - required by the ordinance. Deeds were researched and found the wording was not consistent. Waiting to hear from attorney on how to change the deeds without incurring high expenses. (S. Zyla will lead)

S. Zyla requested to drop salamander traps in the vernal pools at Lantern Ridge in the next few days during the rains to take a count.

- Web site - Ruth Burritt volunteered to maintain; will get admin info from S. Zyla.
- It was suggested that high school student representatives on the Conservation Commission could post blogs.

### 3. Increase Public Awareness on Conservation Matters

- Provide Outreach/Education
- Create Outreach subcommittee (L. Brant will lead)

Discussion about Toby's Pond and the bird houses there. S. Zyla suggested the bird houses be refurbished, add predator guards and move them.

**ACTION:** S. Zyla will contact Rich Minnick about repairing and relocating bird houses at Toby's Pond.

- Communicate via website, newspaper, blogs, social media
- Schedule a talk on invasive plant species

### 8. **Land Use Committee Report - M. Opuszynski**

M. Opuszynski reported that there was no quorum at last meeting. Instead they had discussions with a Nevis & Young representative about storm water management and new state requirements which include cleaning catch basins and ensuring that the system is functioning properly. This effort has to be funded by the individual towns.

It was suggested that the Land Use Committee be in charge of the town Plan of Conservation and Development. M. Opuszynski commented that the Land Use Committee has no authority, but could only make recommendations and suggestions.

D. Betkoski added that the previous Plans of Conservation and Development were completed in 2002 and 2012 and were for 10 years and it is ultimately approved by P&Z.

### 9. **Open Space Management**

- Open Space Preservation Fund - Ordinance Update - Status Report
- Open Space Deeds - Status Report - no update
- Open Space Inventory & Future Planning - Subcommittee Report

M. Opuszynski and D. Betkoski met last month and reviewed the map. They requested an updated version from COG. The Greenway is nearly complete allowing for foot traffic. He noted an area owned by AT&T where lines run through and cannot be built on. It has foot paths through the Tiverton section, and is basically an unpaved road.

D. Betkoski reiterated there has to be a plan for open space and a strategy to accept future land parcel donations.

#### 10. Outreach Activities

- Website update-
- Recycling Project - **ACTION:** S. Zyla will work on recycling flyer.
- Citizen's News - Conservation Awareness articles - **ACTION:** D. Betkoski will submit the article that was in a previous year for Earth Day to the Citizen's News
  - **ACTION:** M. Opuszynski will work on a conservation article to submit in the future
  - D. Betkoski wrote an article on the environmental impact of cigarette butts. This will be submitted to Citizen's News for future publication.
- Riverfest/Duck Race - Saturday May 9 - recycling theme

**ACTION:** L. Brant will organize a recycle relay contest for the May 9 RiverFest.

M. Opuszynski noted that the objective is to increase the items recycled in town rather than put in the trash.

**ACTION:** M. Opuszynski will contact M. Bouchard about posters of what is recyclable and what isn't, stickers and a sample larger recycle bin from Winter Brothers.

D. Betkoski has a tablecloth and giveaways which she will give to M. Bouchard to transport on the day of the event and will confirm space and request table.

L. Brant and B. Chevarella volunteered to man the table.

**ACTION:** L. Brant will create spreadsheet for people to sign up for times to be covered during the day at the RiverFest.

D. Betkoski commented that she's waiting for a response from the Board of Selectmen as to when the trash removal contract expires and suggested that larger recycle bins be negotiated as part of a new contract.

- Prospect CC Contact - D. Betkoski has attempted to contact

## 11. **Projects of Interest**

- Towantic Hill Power Plant - Sophie Zyla attended meeting, awaiting FAA decision
- Bethany Development - application on hold  
D. Betkoski and M. Bouchard are informed of meetings regarding this project.

L. Brant shared information on the CT Forest & Park Association Trails Day to be held on Saturday June 5 and Sunday June 6 throughout the state.

**ACTION:** L. Brant will add Lantern Ridge, Beacon Falls to the CT Trails Day list at [ctwoodlands.org/ct-trails-weekend/2015-event-registration](http://ctwoodlands.org/ct-trails-weekend/2015-event-registration)

M. Opuszynski noted that the local Girl Scouts continue to do maintenance on Lantern Ridge.

**ACTION:** M. Opuszynski will get a thank you sign acknowledging the Girl Scouts' work at Lantern Ridge and present it at the RiverFest.

B. Chevarella shared a news article about the value of open space and how it raises property values.

## 12. **Payment of Invoices** -

- Clerical invoice –  
Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$80.00 for the March 2, 2015 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Opuszynski/Zyla; all aye.

## 13. **Announcements/Adjournment**

The next meeting will be held on Monday, May 4, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 PM: Opuszynski/Zyla; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville  
Clerk

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