

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



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Monthly Meeting Minutes
January 4, 2016
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Lori Paradis Brant called the meeting to order at 6:39 PM.

Commissioners present: Secretary Sophie Zyla, Ashleigh Doherty, Michael Opuszynski

Commissioners absent: Vice Chair Bonnie Chevarella, Ruth Burritt, Tanya Gutierro

2. Approval of Minutes – December 7, 2015

The December 7, 2015 meeting minutes were reviewed. The chair noted that no changes were needed and were accepted as presented.

3. Correspondence -

Received a thank you letter from Amy Paterson of the CT Land Conservation Council for renewing membership.

Memo dated December 7, 2015 from the CT Department of Economic and Community Development to the Beacon Falls Land Use Open Spaces Committee concerning the State Historic Preservation Office review of the Riverbend Park Expansion Plan.

M. Opuszynski showed the map of existing open spaces in Beacon Falls to the commissioners.

Discussion about the proposed parcels to be purchased by the town to expand Riverbend park for more access to the river for fishing and launching canoes and kayaks.

Discussion on the future of Lantern Ridge and Riverbend Park if they will eventually be turned over to Park and Rec. M. Opuszynski felt that Park & Rec would need to budget for and take care of any required maintenance; no longer relying on volunteers to maintain the parcels.

Discussion continued on Open Space Maintenance:

M. Opuszynski commented that he compiled a maintenance schedule identify properties, what maintenance is needed and when it is to be done; including clearing trails and parking lots. He questioned what is realistic to be done solely with volunteers.

S. Zyla suggested creating a Friends of the Conservation Commission to get more people involved as volunteers including high school students needing community service hours. She added that some people may want to volunteer for specific tasks and not attend meetings.

L. Paradis Brant suggested creating a 2-3 year plan listing the projects and maintenance needed for open space parcels and have a list of volunteers to monitor the open space and report on the status at least once per year.

S. Zyla suggested outlining specific tasks needed and forward to the high school for student volunteers looking to complete community service.

A. Doherty suggested checking if there is an environmental club at the high school as another source of volunteers. She added that social media is a good way to get the word out.

L. Paradis Brant suggested the Conservation Commission could host a volunteer appreciation event in the future.

M. Opuszynski commented that he is working with the Council of Governments (COG) to get updated and digital maps of Beacon Falls open space and will share when he gets them. He suggested the AT&T line access area which cuts through the middle of town might be used as open space to connect walking trails.

M. Opuszynski suggested creating a subcommittee to focus on an open space plan to understand the location and access of existing parcels and those properties adjacent and identify and prioritize parcels needed to obtain. He suggested a group working about 2 hours per month on this effort.

L. Paradis Brant suggested getting our "ducks in a row" this year and prioritize desired parcels for an open space plan.

M. Opuszynski pointed out that Lantern Ridge is the only open space parcel that has boundaries marked and the other open space parcels should be done eventually.

S. Zyla commented that there are resources available including volunteers, like the invasive plant working group, through the state of CT, to help.

L. Paradis Brant suggested holding a monthly meeting at Lantern Ridge and walk the trails and invite the public to attend.

M. Opuszynski suggested researching the deeds for the existing parcels; at the March meeting he will suggest the next parcel to work on after Lantern Ridge.

ACTION: L. Paradis Brant will double check with former Chair D. Betkoski on the status of the existing deeds and what needs to be done to make them "in perpetuity" "open space".

S. Zyla suggested using Google Docs to store files for the members to access.

ACTION: L. Paradis Brant requested that S. Zyla to set up a Google docs site for the Conservation Commission.

4. Comments from the Public

No public in attendance.

5. Membership Update -

- a) Provide bios and photos for web site - reminder

6. Land Use Committee Report -

M. Opuszynski said they will meet every 2 months.

7. Open Space Management Update

See notes above

8. Subcommittee Reports

- a) Land Use (Ruth Burritt)

M. Opuszynski reported that the Siting Council came in to discuss fuel cell power plant and that they inspected the property.

- b) Recognition and Grants (Ruth Burritt) - NTR

- c) Open Space Inventory (Mike Opuszynski) - overview
See notes above

- d) Natural Resource Inventory (Sophie Zyla)

- e) Website (Sophie Zyla & Ruth Burritt) View and provide feedback

ACTION: L. Paradis Brant will connect with R. Burritt for an update on the website and the Facebook page.

S. Zyla asked for guidelines for content posted to the Conservation Commission Facebook page. L. Paradis Brant noted that all the Conservation Commission members should be administrators on the Facebook page.

- f) Outreach Activities (Lori Paradis Brant)

February - Beacon Falls Loves its Trails will be the next outreach activity. Posting photos of the trails and comments why you love our trails.

ACTION: L. Paradis Brant will draft a press releases for Citizen's News about Beacon Falls Loves its Trails and present for review at the February meeting.

9. Payment of Invoices -

Clerical invoice –

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

10. Task List

a) Preparing for 2016 - see notes above

11. Announcements

S. Zyla shared brochures she got at the CACIWC annual meeting including information on available resources for invasive plants and a GPS track kit as a smart phone app.

L. Paradis Brant suggested adding habitats to the list of open space inventory.

L. Paradis Brant noted that there is a CT Urban Forest Council meeting in New Haven on Friday January 22 at the CT Ag Station’s Jones Auditorium; emerald ash borer will be discussed by Dr. Clare Rutledge, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. Open to the public.

The next regular monthly meeting will be held on Monday, February 1, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Assembly Room.

12. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 PM: MO/Ashley; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

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