

Town of Colchester
Open Space Advisory Committee
Monday, April 9, 2018
Colchester Town Hall 6:00 PM
Regular Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Chairman Will Hochholzer, Vice-Chairman Ted Fuini, Mary Stevens and Town Staff Jay Gigliotti

Members Absent: Nick Norton, Linda Grzeika and B.O.S. Liaison Rosemary Coyle

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chairman William Hochholzer called the 3/12/18 OSAC Meeting to order at 6:01pm
2. **Citizens Comments:** None
3. **Approval of the March 12, 2018 Regular Meeting Minutes:**

The members present at the 3/12/18 OSAC, were not at the previous meeting in March, so the committee members felt that they could not vote on the minutes until other members who were present at the March meeting were present. The committee determined it would be best to table the March meeting minutes until the May meeting.

Mary Stevens motioned to table the 3/12/18 OSAC meeting minutes. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Ted Fuini. All Members voted in Favor. Motion Carried.

4. **Open Space:**

Cabin Road Tree Removal Hearing

Jay Gigliotti provided the commission with an update, on a hearing to remove several trees by the public works department on Cabin Road. The root systems of the trees to be removed are located over a significant water main. The trees pose a threat to the water main and if the trees blew over during a storm, the roots could potentially disrupt water service for more than ½ of the town.

Mr. Gigliotti explained to the committee that a hearing on the removal of the trees had been scheduled, however, due to a winter storm on the date of the hearing, a make-up date had to be scheduled. There was interest from some of the OSAC members regarding when the hearing would be as they might possible want to attend. Jay Gigliotti stated he would keep everyone informed as to when the hearing would be scheduled.

Moroch Property Open Space Signage

Jay Gigliotti explained the recently acquired Moroch Property open space, required signage to be placed at the an entrance, indicating the property was purchased utilizing funds from the CT DEEP Open Space & Watershed Program. The town had recently received the sign ordered for the Moroch Property and while inspecting it, staff quickly noticed a spelling error on the new sign. Fortunately, the error is small and in speaking with the sign company, may be able to be repaired without having to remake the entire sign. He explained he wanted to have the sign available for the OSAC to view this evening, but due to the error he couldn't. Jay Gigliotti is working with the Public Works Operations Director to get the sign repaired and installed. He will keep the committee updated as to the status of the Moroch Property sign.

Army Corps of Engineers/ Audubon Society Grant Opportunity

Jay Gigliotti explained about a grant opportunity discussed at the March OSAC meeting. The Grant program is being administered jointly by the Army Corps of Engineers and the CT Audubon Society. He explained the funds made available in the grant opportunity have been collected by the Army Corps of Engineers through their regulatory compensatory mitigation fee in lieu program. The funds collected have been made available by CT Watersheds and Colchester falls within the Thames River Watershed and the Connecticut River Watershed. Approx. ¾ of the town is located within the

Connecticut River Watershed, while the other ¼ lies within the Thames River Watershed. The grant opportunity is for \$144,410 for the CT River and \$1,684 for the Thames River Watershed.

The grant funds have been made available for the preservation, restoration and enhancement of wetland and watercourse resources and associated upland buffers. Jay Gigliotti explained the application guidelines require a two-part application process. The first part is the submission of a Letter of Intent. The letter of Intent is due April 16, 2018 and is a brief explanation of the proposed grant application. Letters of intent are reviewed by both the ACOE & Audubon Society as a kind of pre-application screening. If they find your proposal acceptable, the ACOE/Audubon Society notify the applicant either to proceed or not to.

During the March meeting the OSAC discussed the potential for an application to remove invasive species from the Ruby & Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands. Jay Gigliotti had completed his due diligence and learned that the Ruby & Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands has an approx. 18 acre stand of Phragmites located in a wetland system in the northern portion of the park. At first, it appeared that this stand was too large to even remove, however, after speaking with CT DEEP staff, Mr. Gigliotti learned that the management of a stand of invasive species such as Phragmites as large as 18 acres is indeed possible to manage and eradicate.

With the knowledge that this large of an invasive species stand can be managed, Jay Gigliotti told the commission he felt this would be a great application for the Army Corps/ Audubon Society grant program. The commission agreed and stated they supported such a grant application. Jay Gigliotti shall report to the OSAC about the status of the grant at the May Meeting.

Motion made by Ted Fuini to endorse an application/ letter of intent to the Army Corps of Engineers & CT Audubon Society ILF grant program for the removal and management of invasive species at the Ruby & Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands. Seconded by Mary Stevens. All Members voted in Favor. Motion Carried.

Open Space Buyers Fee

In the several previous meetings of the OSAC, the committee discussed the proposed legislation allowing municipalities to establish an ordinance to collect a fee on all real estate transactions in excess of \$150,000. The collected fee would be designated for use only to fund open space and watershed protection/ acquisition. The OSAC voted to endorse the proposed legislation and Town Staff provided testimony in support of the Buyers Fee at a public hearing of the Planning & Development Committee in Hartford.

Jay Gigliotti explained that he had recently received word that the proposed bill was not raised out of Committee and would not be moving any further. The supporters of the proposed legislation, the CT Land Conservation Council, indicated that while they were not pleased the proposed legislation did not make it out of the legislative session, they assured all of their constituents that they would be proposing the bill again at next year's legislative session.

5. **Any Other Business Deemed Necessary:** None

6. **Adjournment**

Motion made by Vice-Chairman Ted Fuini to adjourn the 4/9/18 meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee, seconded by Mary Stevens. All Members Voted in Favor. Motion Carried.

Chairman William Hochholzer adjourned the April 9, 2018 OSAC meeting at 6:35pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Jay Gigliotti