

**CITY OF TORRINGTON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, March 12, 2015
Regular Meeting**

1. **Call To Order:** 6:30 p.m., Room 215, City Hall, 140 Main Street, Torrington, CT

2. **Roll Call and Announcements:** Present: Chairman Christine Altman, James Fedorich, Diane Carroll and Staff Rista Malanca

Others Present: Kathy Ross, Frances Moulder & Mark Linehan from the Torrington Trails Network. Elaine LaBella from Housatonic Valley Association and Mike Morin from Northwest Conservation District

3. **Minutes for Approval:**
 - a. 1/8/15 – regular meeting
 - b. 12/11/14 – regular meeting

Motion made by Ms. Carroll seconded by Mr. Fedorich to approve both the 12/11/14 and 1/8/15 meeting minutes as submitted. Vote unanimous

4. **New Business:**
 - a. **Presentation, Elaine LaBella, Housatonic Valley Association:**
Proposed Naugatuck Valley Heritage Area

Ms. LaBella is the director of Land Protection for the Housatonic Valley Association. She is also part of a group that has been working with the lower Naugatuck Valley Towns for the past 15 years to create a Heritage Area. The proposed Naugatuck Valley Heritage Area would consist of the following Towns: Torrington, Harwinton, Litchfield, Plymouth (Terryville), Thomaston, Watertown, Waterbury, Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, Oxford, Seymour, Ansonia, Derby, and Shelton.

A Heritage Area designation is approved by Congress and overseen by National Park Services; however, it is not a national park. The area would still be operated by local officials and there is no change to any state or local Regulation or Ordinance.

A Heritage Area is an area where natural, cultural & historic resources create nationally distinctive landscaped shaped by human activity and geography.

By being in a Heritage Area Town can promote themselves as such and it is proved to be an Economic driver. It helps bring people to your Town and when designated funds are available from Congress for the following 10 years.

These 14 Towns are united geographically by the river, economically by the strong industrial base that for centuries made these mill towns and center of the American Industrial Revolution, and culturally by the ethnically diverse immigrants whose institutions and customs took root in these communities.

In order to obtain federal funds for a feasibility study to support National Heritage Area Status, we need to demonstrate public enthusiasm from local communities, residents, boards, and groups.

Motion made by Ms. Altman seconded by Ms. Carroll to send a letter in support of the National Heritage Area. Vote Unanimous.

Commissioners suggested that other City departments such as Economic Development and the Mayor's office may also be interested in submitting letters of support. Ms. LaBella expressed interested in speaking the both the Mayor and the Economic Development director and would love the opportunity to come and speak with them.

b. **Torrington Trails Network:**

Trails Network 2015 Goals

Mark Linehan, Kathy Ross and Frances Moulder spoke to the Commission about the goals they have developed for 2015. They prepared and distributed "Torrington Trail Network, Goals for 2015" for the Commission to review.

They are optimistic that they will get the grant to construct a floating bridge over the Still River. Their concern is that if they construct the bridge they will need to get an easement from either Pepper, Torrington Diesel or the Royals to connect the trail to the Old Winsted Road. They asked the Commission for support in asking the City to contact these property owners to see if easements were possible.

Motion made by Ms. Carol seconded by Mr. Fedorich to support the City in asking for easements to continue this trail to the Old Winsted Road. Vote Unanimous

6. **Old Business:**

a. Disk Golf Course, Alvord Park

Location: 391 Kennedy Drive, Discussion with Northwest Conservation
District correspondence

Mike Morin was present to discuss his proposal of a Disk Golf Course at Alvord Park. Mr. Morin submitted a packet explaining how disk golf is played, a map of the proposed course and the impact to the park.

The Commission thought that this looked like a low impact way to use the park and hopefully bring visitors to Torrington.

Motion made by Ms. Altman seconded by Ms. Carroll to submit a favorable report to the Planning and Zoning Commission for their 8-24 request to construct a disk golf course at Alvord Park. Vote Unanimous.

b. Update on Open Space Inventory

The Commission updated the Torrington Trails Network on the Open Space Inventory they have started and noted that they plan to begin site visit this spring. The Torrington Trails Network is invited and expressed interested in participating

7. Open Discussion/Public Comment:

Ms. Malanca shared correspondence:

- letter from the Aquarion Company looking for nomination for their environmental Champion Award to honor volunteers who have achieved exemplary results in environmental project.
- 2015 Conservation annual meeting – Christine Altman would like to attend

Ms. Malanca said she had talked to Commissioner Fedorich regarding his concerns (on behalf of Trout Unlimited) with Toce Brothers plowing all their snow down the bank into the Farmington River. Ms. Malanca has done some research and the state has recommendations regarding snow removal; however, there are no regulations in place to prohibit this type of activity.

Mr. Fedorich explained that the fence is on City property and they are unlocking the gate and removing the bar in order to push the snow down the hill. Trout Unlimited is willing to make a complaint to the Army Corps of Engineers if necessary in order to get this matter resolved. They are requesting that the City put a lock on the gate that they have the key too, not Toce Brothers, and that the fence bar be welded in place so it cannot be removed easily.

Motion made by Mr. Fedorich seconded by Ms. Altman to recommend that the City property secure the gate so that snow cannot be plowed down the bank of the River. Vote Unanimous

Ms. Malanca also noted that Earth day was coming up, she will be preparing the flyers and signs for this year. When they are ready she will email all Commissioners and urges each Commissioner to come in and pick up a sign and flyers to help distribute.

8. Adjournment:

Motion made by Ms. Carroll seconded by Mr. Fedorich to adjourn the meeting at 8:15. Vote Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Rista Malanca