

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



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2014
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.

Commissioners present: Mike Bouchard, Michael Opuszynski, Chris Wilemski, Jeff Kean,
Secretary Tanya Gutierro

Commissioner absent: Vice Chairman Noralie D'Amico

2. Approval of Minutes – December 2, 2013 & January 6, 2014

Note: The February 3, 2014 meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather.

Motion to accept the December 2, 2013 meeting minutes: **Bouchard/Wilemski**; all aye.
M. Opuszynski abstained as he was not at the December 2, 2013 meeting.

Motion to accept the January 6, 2014 meeting minutes: **Bouchard/Kean**; all aye.
T. Gutierro and C. Wilemski abstained as they were not at the January 6, 2014 meeting.

3. Correspondence

- Notice of Intent from DEEP dated 1/16/14, to eliminate 60 day waiting period for general permit applicants

ACTION: M. Opuszynski will verify whether I&W will act on the Notice of Intent from DEEP dated 1/16/14, to eliminate 60 day waiting period for general permit applicants.

- Audubon membership renewal notice; Jan-Feb issue
Motion to renew the Conservation Commission's Audubon annual membership at the cost of \$35: **Opuszynski/Gutierro**; all aye.
- CLCC and Kellogg educational sessions: Sat. 3/15/14 at Wesleyan University, Middletown
- CACIWC Habitat, Winter 2014 newsletter
- News article dated 1/12/14 about the town of Oxford receiving a grant from the CT Community Foundation to address removal of invasive species in their open space;

Work to be done by volunteers including an OHS biology teacher; this was a good example of community collaboration

- Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society newsletter:
ACTION: C. Wilemski volunteered to post links to various newsletters on the Conservation Commission web site.
- First Selectman memo dated 1/8/14 appointing Rich Minnick as the Land Steward for Beacon Falls
- Budget status reports as of 1/31/14 & 2/27/14
- River Bend folder of information from Rich Minnick
- CT DEEP newsletter
- Aquarion Water info on Aquarion Environmental Champion Awards: \$2,500 grant opportunity, deadline of May 2, 2014

4. Comments from the Public - none

5. Membership Update

- Conservation Commission Ordinance – proposed revision re: membership term dates
According to Ordinance Establishing Conservation Commission Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 7-131A effective March 1, 2006 under
“5.0 VACANCIES: shall be filled for the un-expired portion of said term”

After discussion, it was determined that the language in the ordinance may not need to change; filling the unexpired portion term plus a new term was understood. Proposal was to extend various terms; each regular member be shall serve six (6) years. Currently all commissioners’ terms expire in 2015.

Discussion:

C. Wilemski commented that it would be up to the Board of Selectmen to approve any Reappointments.

D. Betkoski advised the commissioners that when their term expiration approaches to let the Board of Selectmen know if they wish to be reappointed to a new 6-year term or be replaced.

- CACIWC Annual Conference report – held November 16

M. Opuszynski had requested the power point presentation from one of the speakers, but has yet to receive it.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will email the CACIWC conference speaker for the presentation slides.

- Dedicated email account for Chair - update

Have an official email through the town or an independent email account?

ACTION: D. Betkoski will contact the town web master about getting a town email address dedicated to the Conservation Commission Chair.

D. Betkoski also noted that the Conservation Commission has a filing cabinet in town hall assembly room to store plans, documents, minutes and maps for historical reference.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will have copies of keys made up for all commissioners to have access to the filing cabinet.

6. 2014 Goals – Developing action plans

D. Betkoski reviewed the 7 draft 2014 Conservation Commission Goals.

#1 Review and update Open Space Preservation Fund and Conservation Commission Ordinance to clarify processes:

D. Betkoski had requested this be addressed at a Land Use meeting with Rich Minnick, as well as at several other boards. It needs to be confirmed that any budgeted dollars in the land acquisition line item will be moved into an interest bearing account and be restricted for purposes of future land acquisition and shall not go into the town's general fund. To be completed before the end of fiscal year 2014.

M. Opuszynski suggested that someone from the Conservation Commission attend a Board of Finance meeting to raise this issue and request any leftover money be moved into a separate account according to the ordinance creating an open space preservation fund and to emphasize that the Conservation Commission will request additional funding in the next budget.

The next BOF meeting Tuesday March 11 at 7:30 if anyone is available to attend.

M. Bouchard quoted from the Ordinance Creating an Open Space Preservation Fund effective 9/29/07 under section 3.0 Expenditures from the Fund "b. Recommendations for the acquisition of any parcel and/or easements, rights, or interests therein and the sum to be expended therefore shall be reviewed by the Beacon Falls Open Space Committee with a recommendation to the appropriate Boards and Commission per the Committee's enabling ordinance, and approved by vote of the Beacon Falls Conservation Commission and forwarded to the Beacon Falls Planning & Zoning Commission's report, and any incorporation of any changes approved by vote of the Conservation Commission, any recommendations for acquisition shall be forwarded to the Beacon Falls Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance for their action." He questioned if the Beacon Falls Open Space Committee still existed.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will invite Rich Minnick to the April 7, 2014 Conservation Commission meeting or if this is not viable, then call a special meeting to clarify the Open Space Preservation Fund process.

#2 Work more actively with P&Z in reviewing development and other projects:

Participate in Land Use meeting, when called.

#3 Continue to increase Conservation Commission membership knowledge of conservation matters and their legal and procedural workings:

Conservation Commissioners shall attend training as it becomes available and as schedules allow.

#4 Update open space inventory and ensure property is preserved in perpetuity:

D. Betkoski raised the question about the deeds to town open space, is it preserved in perpetuity? Do we have deeds for other parcels and are they guaranteed to be preserved?

Deeds to town open space parcels need to be identified and confirmed that it is preserved in perpetuity.

M. Opuszynski suggested sending a letter from the Conservation Commission to the Board of Selectmen requesting that a separate account for the land acquisition fund be set up and ask for assistance in establishing this separate interest bearing account to preserve the money already approved in the budget.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will send a letter to the Board of Selectmen requesting assistance for setting up a separate account for the Land Acquisition Fund.

M. Opuszynski suggested having a Conservation Commissioner member attend P&Z meetings as a liaison, to keep apprised of projects.

M. Bouchard noted that in the 2/20/14 P&Z minutes Blackberry Development LLC was mentioned regarding a subdivision that was approved in 2004, was ready to move forward.

#5 Create a plan to connect existing properties and identify future properties to acquire:

It was noted there was an overall plan in the past. M. Opuszynski suggested looking at the Current Plan of Conservation & Development.

ACTION: M. Opuszynski will look at the list of existing properties and tie them into the

Plan of Conservation & Development.

#6 Define maintenance needs and responsibility of open space (e.g. Lantern Ridge):

D. Betkoski commented that once needs are identified, the Conservation Commission could apply for grants towards those expenses. To be completed by the end of 2014.

C. Wilemski suggested creating a generic checklist of maintenance items to review for each property parcel at different intervals during the year (parking areas, materials, fencing, security, brush removal, signage, etc.)

M. Bouchard suggested focusing on a couple of items for the parcel and not to get overwhelmed.

J. Kean concurred about establishing a maintenance schedule for the open space.

ACTION: J. Kean will present a draft maintenance checklist for the open space to the April 7, 2014 meeting.

M. Opuszynski suggested asking the Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts to volunteer for clean up and trail maintenance for Lantern Ridge.

ACTION: M. Opuszynski will ask local Girl Scouts about volunteering to do periodic clean up at Lantern Ridge.

J. Kean departed at 7:53.

#7 Conduct Outreach Activities to educate Conservation Commission members, other boards and commission as well as the public on such topics as: recycling and rain gardens:

The Conservation Commission will have booth at RiverFest on May 3. Giveaway materials are still available.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will update the 2014 Conservation Commission goal sheet.

7. Budget Update

\$500 remains in land acquisition fund

Budgeted money can be used for maintenance needs; assess what remains in the budget in April or May. More books for the library may be purchased.

C. Wilemski noted that the domain name may need to be renewed.

8. Land Use Committee

- Communication with Land Use Committee Chair – request for meeting to discuss P&Z procedures pertaining to conservations land/fee

9. Open Space Management

- Update from P&Z Vice-Chair re: legal consultation and P&Z procedures pertaining to conservations land/fee
- Communication from Land Use Chair
- Open Space Inventory & Future Planning

10. Outreach Activities

The Conservation Commission anticipates having a booth at the Duck Race/RiverFest on Saturday May 3.

11. Payment of Invoices

- Clerical invoice

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville’s invoice requesting payment of \$95.00 for the January 6, 2014 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Opuszynski/Bouchard; all aye.

M. Opuszynski asked if the Conservation Commission was considered a non-profit group or municipal group, and if it would be eligible for a grant from Aquarion’s program,. He added that the Conservation Commission would probably need to work with a non-profit group to be eligible for any grants.

12. Announcements/Adjournment

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 7, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 PM: Opuszynski/Gutierro; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

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