

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



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
June 2, 2014
(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

Commissioners present: Mike Bouchard, Chris Wilemski, Sophie Zyla, Michael Opuszynski

Commissioner absent: Jeff Kean, Secretary Tanya Gutierro

Others present: Jonathan Genz, 48 Diana Lane (arrived at 7:22)

2. Approval of Minutes – May 5, 2014

Motion to accept the May 5, 2014 meeting minutes: **Bouchard/Opuszynski**; all aye. *S. Zyla abstained as she was not at the May 5 meeting.*

3. Correspondence

- Notice of Intent from DEEP dated 1/16/14, to eliminate 60 day waiting period for general permit applicants - follow up by M. Opuszynski
M. Opuszynski reported that he gave this letter to I&W last month, and they had no issues or comments

D. Betkoski explained M. Opuszynski's liaison role on the Conservation Commission as he's also on I&W commission for the benefit of new member, S. Zyla.

- Invitation to the May 28 Ordinance meeting: Rich Minnick sponsored a Land Use workshop with Joe Fitzpatrick, Chairmen of P&Z, with Attorney Byrne for Commission/Committee Member's and Interested Parties to help all the commissions better understand the role and responsibilities. J. Fitzpatrick provided information packets before this meeting to members of the Conservation Commission, Park & Rec, P&Z and the Board of Selectmen. M. Bouchard, M. Opuszynski and D. Betkoski attended as well as members from Park & Rec and I&W.

D. Betkoski provided some history on the ordinances questions which were raised by the Conservation Commission last fall about the procedures of how a developer can develop

property and that according to state statute the developer must donate 10% of the land as open space to the town.

Atty Byrne recommended updating ordinances and call the fund by one name to avoid confusion.

The Conservation Commission will request that their budget line item called Land Acquisition Fund be changed to Open Space Preservation Fund.

M. Opuszynski was unclear about the name of this fund and if there was another budget line item for the town to purchase other land and ensure the Conservation Commission fund couldn't be used for non-open space property.

D. Betkoski noted that there is a process for the town accepting fees and/or land from a developer. M. Boucher noted that the Board of Selectmen has the ultimate say about any transaction.

D. Betkoski cited Matthies Park as a good example of land donated to the town and that the Board of Selectmen assigned its management to Park & Rec.

S. Zyla asked if preservation was the same as conservation, and if land is preserved then a pavilion can't be built on it, that the parcel would be strictly for passive recreation.

D. Betkoski commented that the conservation plan is on the town web site and this is the guiding document for the town.

M. Bouchard questioned what the Open Space Committee was as mentioned in the Open Space Preservation Fund ordinance. D. Betkoski noted that it was named in the ordinance before the Conservation Commission was officially formed.

M. Opuszynski said the Beacon Falls Open Space Committee doesn't exist anymore. He suggested that it could become a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission to research Open Space and report back to the Conservation Commission.

D. Betkoski explained that subcommittees were used in the past but due to Conservation Commission turnover, this practice had to discontinue and to get back to basics as new members went through a learning curve to get everyone up to speed.

D. Betkoski suggested that the overall goal was to get the information squared away; this meeting opened communication, and requested that everyone review meeting minutes and raise questions.

- Invitation to the Sewer Upgrade meeting on May 29 at a special Board of Selectmen meeting no one from Conservation Commission was able to attend; the minutes were posted to town web site.

D. Betkoski was concerned about an open house invitation at Chatfield Farms and if it was in violation of the code of ethics when a developer invited elected officials to such an event.

- Spring 2014 DEEP newsletter

4. Comments from the Public

Girl Scout interest in Lantern Ridge – M. Opuzsynski reported that the Girl Scouts will Be at Lantern Ridge on Sunday June 22 at noon for approximately 3 hours to start Working on trail clean up. He requested a Conservation Commission representative meet the girls to show them the trails. D. Betkoski assured him that someone will be there.

D. Betkoski also noted that a Boy Scout troop in Beacon Falls was interested in doing conservation work.

5. Membership Update

- Sophie Zyla – interested member
Chairperson D. Betkoski welcomed Sophie Zyla as a new member; who had submitted a letter of intent, was appointed at the May 29 Board of Selectmen meeting and sworn in

S. Zyla shared some of her background which included being a former real estate agent; attending school for outdoor leadership; studying environmental education at UMass, has a journalism certificate, and has done graduate work in biology. She is also on the Board of Directors for Audubon CT BOD and Naugatuck Valley Audubon.

6. Budget Update

- Month to date report
As of May 29, \$300 was allocated for the purchase of books; money remains in the budget for supplies. At the May 5, 2014 meeting, a motion was approved for M. Opuzsynski to purchase garbage bags and gloves for the Girl Scout volunteers to use during their clean up of Lantern Ridge.

Motion to spend up to \$100 of FY 2013-14 Conservation Commission budgeted dollars for

supplies for cleaning and maintenance for volunteers and Conservation Commission members to use for cleanup of open spaces: **Opuszynski/Bouchard**; all aye.

ACTION: M. Opuszynski will purchase 48 pairs of gloves for volunteers and trash bags.

Motion to approve spending up to \$500 of FY 2013-14 Conservation Commission budgeted dollars to purchase marketing and education materials: **Opuszynski/Wilemski**; all aye.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will contact former commissioner A. Goerig for information on purchasing more Beacon Falls bags that will include the web site address on the new order.

- Land Acquisition Fund – changing name to Open Space Preservation Fund

Book purchases – Chair D. Betkoski expressed her thanks to Library Director Sue Dowdell for researching and providing a comprehensive list of 12 children’s and 10 adult books for potential purchase by the Conservation Commission. Vice Chair M. Bouchard and D. Betkoski reviewed and approved this list and requested S. Dowdell purchase them for the library using FY_2013-14 Conservation Commission budgeted dollars.

7. Land Use Committee

- Meeting with Land Use Board and Atty. Byrne coordinated by P&Z Chair on May 28

Next meeting will be held in September. Members from all commissions and boards are invited, it will be a public meeting and anyone may attend.

M. Opuszynski noted the representative would have to be approved by the Board of Selectmen based on a recommendation of the Conservation Commission to name a primary and alternate.

M. Bouchard said he would like to attend. M. Opuszynski also expressed an interest in attending this meeting.

ACTION: D. Betkoski will notify the Board of Selectmen of the Conservation Commission’s recommendation to appoint Mike Bouchard as the primary and Mike Opuszynski as the alternate representatives for the Land Use Committee.

8. Open Space Management

- Open Space Inventory & Future Planning

M. Opuszynski had volunteered to update the Open Space Inventory and identify other potential properties in town that the Conservation Commission may consider purchasing in the future with the intent to preserve the rural-ness of the town and possibly connect trails.

Discussion about wildlife animals spotted in Beacon Falls over the past few years on open space parcels and in yards to include bears, bobcats, and coyotes.

D. Betkoski stressed the importance of education to know what wildlife is in our town, what they eat, what they are a threat to.

ACTION: S. Zyla will email a flyer she created for litter pick up at Matthies Park to M. Opuszynski to use for the Girl Scout clean up effort at Lantern Ridge.

M. Opuszynski commented that he found a lot of litter around WRHS while walking there.

S. Zyla noted that she will work the BioBlitz in Matthies Park scheduled for June 5 & 6, 2015 sponsored by the Naugatuck Valley Audubon. She plans to visit the high school to create interest for young scientists to get involved.

M. Opuszynski said he and J. Kean are working on a maintenance list for open space. He provided an overview of the maintenance of town open space parcels: that park & rec has some responsibility, Toby's Pond falls under the stewardship of Rich Minnick, and volunteers do much of the required maintenance.

9. Outreach Activities

D. Betkoski suggested considering reinstating subcommittees within the Conservation Commission to work on goals and to start focusing on outreach/education activities.

10. Payment of Invoices

- Clerical invoice

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$80.00 for the May 5, 2014 meeting and associated administrative work as well as a bill to include time spent completing the June 2 meeting minutes and pay these bills as submitted before June 30, 2014 deadline: Bouchard/Opuszynski;

Discussion:

Rather than merge these two bill payments into one motion, it was agreed to approve the current bill as usual and make a second motion to approve future clerking fees to cover completion of the June meeting minutes and July meeting agenda work to comply with the finance department's request to have all bills funded from the FY 2013-14 budget be submitted before the June 30, 2014 end of fiscal year deadline.

Motion vote: all nay

Motion to approve the expenses associated with the clerical fees for the June 2, 2014 meeting not to exceed the budgeted amount for the FY 2013-14: **Opuszynski/Zyla**; all opposed.

Motion to approve the clerical billing to include all work in the month of June not to exceed \$150.00: **Opuszynski/Wilemski**; all aye.

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$80.00 for the May 5, 2014 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: **Bouchard/Opuszynski**; all aye.

12. Announcements/Adjournment

C. Wilemski had a question from an I&W meeting about a courtesy visit by a new developer planning to build homes on West Road and if this would be a new project subject to a fee versus land payment to the town.

Discussion:

M. Opuszynski shared what he knew about this project and that it was a plot of land to have 3 homes built. D. Betkoski noted that this project was not sizable enough to merit a land/fee payment to the town. C. Wilemski commented that he was unaware of a minimum development size before the town would receive a fee or property donation.

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

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 PM: **Bouchard/Opuszynski**; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville
Clerk

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