

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



**BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**Monthly Meeting Minutes**  
**December 1, 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: Vice Chairman Mike Bouchard, Michael Opuszynski, Sophie Zyla, Secretary Tanya Gutierro

Commissioner absent: Jeff Kean

**2. Approval of Minutes – July 7, August 4, & September 8, & October 6, 2014 meetings**

Motion to accept the July 7, 2014 meeting minutes: Opuszynski/Zyla; all aye. M. Bouchard abstained as he did not attend the July 7, 2014 meeting.

Motion to accept the August 4, 2014 meeting minutes: Gutierro/Bouchard; all aye. S. Zyla abstained as she did not attend the August 4, 2014 meeting.

Motion to accept the September 8, 2014 special meeting minutes: Bouchard/Zyla; all aye. T. Gutierro abstained as she did not attend the September 8, 2014 special meeting.

Due to lack of quorum of commissioners the October 6, 2014 meeting minutes could not be approved.

The November 3, 2014 workshop notes were deemed to be correct by those commissioners in attendance.

**3. Correspondence - none**

**4. Comments from the Public -**

M. Bouchard noted that the link in the web notification email to read the water commission minutes required a password.

M. Opuszynski commented that while the link in the email notice required a password, access to these minutes via the town web site required no password.

## 5. Membership Update -

- Notice for recruitment: Chairman D. Betkoski requested that First Selectman Chris Bielik ask Karen Wilson to place an ad in the paper seeking anyone interested in serving as a commissioner; awaiting response.
- CACIWC Annual Conference Registration - held on November 15; T. Gutierro & D. Betkoski attended. D. Betkoski noted that the conference was well attended.

T. Gutierro attended a workshop on pond dredging and open space trails workshop. She reported some tips were shared to keep trails low maintenance, user friendly, and to use ramps not stairs when needed. She also learned that black bears in CT are generally up to 200 pounds; however the biggest one found in CT was 700 pounds. They advised to not be afraid of bears, treat them with respect and to keep pepper spray on hand.

D. Betkoski attended workshops on climate change and wetlands. She commented that CACIWC members are doing critical work that matters. She reported that climate change trends include increase of CO<sub>2</sub>, rising ocean temperatures, global warming, elevated sea levels, and having more extreme weather events. She noted that free webinars are available online including "Loss of Carbon through Forest Lost".

**ACTION:** D. Betkoski will forward the link to the webinar.

<http://clear.uconn.edu/%5C/webinars/CLEARseries14/carbon-sequestration.htm>

D. Betkoski also shared about the riparian's workshop which serve as the first line of defense used for flood control, slows run off, and traps pollutants. NRCS Buffer Bulletins provide information on conservation buffers which include strips or other areas with trees or grass that help control pollutants, erosion and other environmental concerns. It was recommended that water treatment plants use more buffers and the speaker noted that real estate values were higher when the property was located closer to a buffer. Buffers can also protect wildlife.

M. Opuszynski commented that land shouldn't be over developed for these reasons and the public needs to be educated.

D. Betkoski commented that the keynote speaker CT DEEP Commissioner Robert Klee touched on updating the strategic plan, be watchful of emerging diseases like ash borer, a call for education and land use planning, climate change, mitigation or adaptation, infrastructure, open space wetland buffers, and information on pipeline construction.

M. Opuszynski shared a story about the prospective power lines that were to cross the Long Island Sound. He advised listening to both sides of the issues and to get all the information.

D. Betkoski commented that groups working together will go further rather than each side arguing against the other.

#### **6. Budget Update**

D. Betkoski reported that the FY 2013-2014 budget was reconciled and the Conservation Commission ended the budget year in the black.

She also noted that the \$500 earmarked for Open Space Preservation Fund was transferred from the 2014-2015 budget into the bank account. Town Treasurer M. Krenesky was to follow up on the bank fees deducted.

#### **7. Land Use Committee**

M. Opuszynski announced that he will be the chairman and represent Inland Wetlands  
M. Bouchard will be the Conservation Commission representative.

There will be no further meetings in 2014 due to the holidays. Regular meetings have been scheduled for the 3rd Wednesday of the month for 2015. Rich Minnick is the Vice Chairman of the Land Use Committee.

#### **8. Open Space Management**

- Open Space Inventory & Future Planning - no activity to date on how to update the deeds from Atty Byrne; M. Opuszynski noted he will form a subcommittee.
- Open Space Preservation Fund - Ordinance Review  
D. Betkoski forwarded an edited version to the commissioners to better define open space, and ensure "in perpetuity" is noted on any deeds.

M. Bouchard asked if a town meeting is required to change the ordinance; D. Betkoski responded yes.

D. Betkoski requested confirmation that this version of the ordinance was good to go forward.

- 18 Westview Road. Mesa Excavation & Paving, Inc.

The Conservation Commission received an offer from Mesa Excavation & Paving to donate parcel of land noted as 18 Westview Road.

M. Bouchard commented that on his map this parcel is already noted as open space, but doesn't believe the deed was signed over to the town.

M. Opuszynski questioned who technically owns this parcel and who is paying taxes on it.

M. Bouchard contacted the assessor to view the tax bill but did not know if taxes were paid.

**ACTION:** D. Betkoski will check with Town Clerk Len Greene to see if the town has the deed for this parcel and ask the tax collector if taxes have been paid and will keep the Board of Selectmen informed.

**ACTION:** S. Zyla will check on the status and wording on the deed and the tax records.

## **9. Outreach Activities**

- Recycling Project

D. Betkoski had emailed the Board of Selectmen regarding the trash collection contract asking if adding recycling bins would be possible; she is awaiting a response.

M. Opuszynski researched recycling efforts in neighboring towns and found a recycling contact in Naugatuck. He also noted that CT DEEP has educational materials available.

D. Betkoski contacted Sherrill Baldwin of CT DEEP regarding any potential recycling grants; she is awaiting a response.

S. Zyla suggested implementing a swap at the transfer station to repurpose items and let people take things that others discard.

M. Opuszynski suggested using a poster illustrating the length of time different items take to degrade in order to educate the public. Perhaps this could be posted on the Conservation Commission web site.

D. Betkoski suggested making a town recycling plan and adding it to the Conservation Commission 2015 goals. This information could then be sent through the Region 16 schools and flyers posted at the library. She also suggested including education on the fact that town storm drains eventually empty into Long Island Sound.

*Discussion ensued about garbage on the street when trash bins are dumped over or invaded by wildlife.*

M. Bouchard suggested sending a complaint with photos of any house where the trash is in the street to the Board of Selectmen.

M. Opuszynski commented that he has routinely seen an unusual amount of trash in the Woodland parking lot.

D. Betkoski suggested that he notify the WRHS principal to make sure he's aware of this problem.

## **10. Projects of Interest**

- Towantic Hill Power Plant

D. Betkoski referenced an email sent to the commissioners about this project and how pollutants would be coming into Beacon Fall from Oxford airport. She noted that more meetings were to be held.

S. Zyla commented that some of the recommendations are band aid solutions and that there is a real water shortage and people need to change their habits about water usage and need to conserve.

M. Opuszynski suggested submitting an article to Citizen's News once a month to educate the public and to raise awareness about recycling and conservation.

D. Betkoski stressed that any action needs to be consistently done.

**ACTION:** M. Opuszynski will contact the Citizen's News editor about having a monthly blurb on conservation submitted to the paper.

T. Gutierro suggested coordinating with the recycling contact in Naugatuck to perhaps share the workload.

- Bethany Development

D. Betkoski noted that Bruce Loomis from the Bethany Conservation Commission was keeping her and M. Bouchard apprised of any activity on this project which involves significant acreage on the Beacon Falls-Bethany line which would have possible adverse

effects on ridgelines, habitat and traffic volume. As of yet there was no formal proposal.

**11. Payment of Invoices -**

- Clerical invoice –

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$61.25 for the November 3, 2014 session and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Gutierro/Opuszynski; all aye.

**12. Announcements/Adjournment**

M. Opuszynski gave an update on the Inland Wetlands Commission that at their last meeting was there no quorum and that all the commissioners terms had expired. The Board of Selectmen had to reappoint all the commissioners.

D. Betkoski pointed out that all the Conservation Commission members terms expire on the same date in 2015 and that elections for officers will be held in January 2015 per the town ordinance.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, January 5, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 PM: Bouchard/Opuszynski; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Melville  
Clerk

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