

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



**BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**Monthly Meeting Minutes**  
**September 14, 2015**  
**(Draft Copy-Subject to Revision)**

**1. Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Diane Betkoski called the meeting to order at 6:42 PM.

Commissioners present: Michael Opuszynski, Lori Paradis Brant, Ruth Burritt, Tanya Gutierro (arrived 7:24, departed 8:38)

Commissioner absent: Secretary Sophie Zyla

Others present: John Dixon, Sierra Brant, Bonnie Chevarella

**2. Approval of Minutes – July 6, 2015**

The July 6, 2015 monthly meeting minutes were reviewed. The Chair noted that no corrections were needed and R. Burritt suggested the minutes be accepted as presented at the discretion of the Chair.

**3. Correspondence -**

- CACIWC summer newsletter
- Summer DEEP newsletter
- Cancelled PO for CACIWC membership renewal
- First Selectman memo dated 12 August 2015 re procedures if expenditures exceed funding line item and giving advance notice to BOS & BOF
- Sep-Oct Audubon magazine
- CACIWC announcement of annual meeting Sat. November 14 in Wallingford at Villa Capri banquet facility <http://caciwc.org/pages/annualMtg/2015/index.html>  
Commissions are to inform D. Betkoski at the October 5 meeting they wish to attend
- Informational memo from Pullman & Comley Attorneys dated August 11 re the proposed energy park in Beacon Falls, notifying the Conservation Commission has the option to petition for declaratory approval to the CT Siting Council.

M. Opuszynski summarized the informational meeting on the proposed energy park that he attended. He felt the overview did not include much technical detail as he had hoped.

D. Betkoski thanked him for his explanation and added the importance of understanding and getting involved in the decision and to voice one's opinions/concerns.

R. Burritt brought up the point that the according to the town ordinance, the Conservation Commission has the right to intervene, however in an advisory not enforcement capacity. She was also concerned about any potential liability of the commissioners.

D. Betkoski suggested the Conservation Commission's concerns need to be noted.

D. Betkoski noted the Land Use Commission will meet on September 23 at 7:30 and the fuel cell plant is on the agenda. She suggested channeling any questions thru M. Opuszynski.

L. Brant commented that according to the energy park presentation, Beacon Falls doesn't have noise ordinances.

M. Opuszynski suggested sending a letter of concern to the Board of Selectmen however he checked the town ordinance notebook and read the existing ordinance dated January 20, 2008 found under environment. Town ordinances are posted on the Beacon Falls town website (Noise ordinance found on pages 135-141 [http://www.beaconfalls-ct.org/Pages/BeaconFallsCT\\_Bcomm/Plan/201406BFTownOrdinance.pdf](http://www.beaconfalls-ct.org/Pages/BeaconFallsCT_Bcomm/Plan/201406BFTownOrdinance.pdf))

- CT Land Conservation Council notice of upcoming training; R. Burritt will add dates to database on web page
- Naugatuck Valley Audubon newsletter

#### **4. Comments from the Public -**

Chair D. Betkoski invited P&Z Chair, Kevin McDuffie to meeting; unavailable.

B. Chevarella inquired about the vacancy of commissioner M. Bouchard's position and expressed interest in filling the vacant slot.

D. Betkoski thanked B. Chevarella for volunteering to fill the Conservation Commission vacancy and advised her to write a letter to First Selectman Bielik requesting to be appointed to the Conservation Commission.

## **5. Membership Update -**

- Conservation Commission - Ordinance Update to stagger term

M. Opuszynski suggested adding a stipulation that members stay on the commission until a replacement is found.

L. Brant suggested adding a maximum term limit to keep the commission fresh.

Discussion ensued about term limits and if there is a need to have staggered terms, or have commissioners remain as long as the member wish to stay.

M. Opuszynski pointed out there are no term limits; members can renew if desired.

M. Opuszynski suggested adding the clause that a Conservation Commission member can continue to serve on the Conservation Commission in full capacity until a replacement is identified, appointed and sworn in.

Discussion ensued about reappointments.

D. Betkoski recommended not making any revision to the existing ordinance. She noted that with the current ordinance, all commissioners terms (except M. Opuszynski who is under a IWWC term) expire on November 5, 2015. In an effort to avoid a dissolution of the Conservation Commission due expiring members terms, she suggested each commissioner forward a letter of intent to the Board of Selectmen prior to November 5, ask the Board of Selectmen hold a special meeting in November to make appointments/reappointments,, and request the Town Clerk attend the Conservation Commission meeting in December to swear everyone in.

- Conflict of Interest form - to be discussed at the October 5, 2015 meeting
- Chair D. Betkoski noted that Mike Bouchard submitted his resignation effective immediately

## **6. Budget**

- Variance Report - not received  
D. Betkoski noted that \$25.60 was deposited into the Open Space Preservation Fund from RiverFest donations.
- Update on String Backpacks - full box was found, no need to order more at this time.

## **7. Land Use Committee Report -**

M. Opuszynski noted that there has been no quorum from last few months.

## **8. Open Space Management**

- Open Space Preservation Fund - Ordinance Update - Status Report

D. Betkoski forwarded the existing and proposed revised Open Space Preservation Fund ordinance to the First Selectman, with appropriate town form, to be presented at a future Town Meeting for approval.

- Open Space Deeds - Status Report -

Deeds do not all contain the language "in perpetuity" or are labeled as open space.

D. Betkoski noted that she asked C. Bielik to consult the town attorney.

M. Opuszynski asked if appropriate easements were also written into the deed.

L. Brant asked if easements are the same as right of way; she suggested seeking advice from a attorney who specializes in land issues. She recommended contacting Amy Paterson, Executive Director, CT Land Conservation Council and invite her to a Conservation Commission meeting.

D. Betkoski suggested having Amy Paterson's visit tied to another meeting to make the best use of her time.

D. Betkoski suggested asking for advice on a low cost way to rewrite the deeds to state it is for open space and in perpetuity.

D. Betkoski asked about further information on implications of a declaratory ruling with the CT siting council and any liability on the Conservation Commission.

- Open Space Inventory & Future Planning - Subcommittee Report

## **9. Subcommittee Reports**

- Land Use (Diane Betkoski)

The Conservation Commission needs a representative to replace M. Bouchard.

D. Betkoski explained that the position is to represent the Conservation Commission and act as a liaison to bring information back to meetings.

M. Opuszynski added that it is an advisory group, with representatives from other land commissions to provide updates from all the commissions.

R. Burritt expressed her interest in serving as the Conservation Commission representative on the Land Use Committee.

Motion to appoint Ruth Burritt as the Conservation Commission representative on the Land Use Committee replacing M. Bouchard: **Gutierro/Brant**; all aye.

- Recognition and Grants (Diane Betkoski & Ruth Burritt)

R. Burritt reported that she was setting up dates in a database for the website.

D. Betkoski gave her information on DEEP grants available to municipalities for aquatic invasive species controls.

- Open Space Inventory (Mike Opuszynski)
- Natural Resource Inventory (Sophie Zyla)
- Website (Sophie Zyla & Ruth Burritt) -

R. Burritt noted that she created a Conservation Commission group on Facebook which is like a bulletin board and that a Conservation Commission Facebook page already existed.

- Outreach Activities (Lori Brant)

L. Brant reviewed the draft yearly outreach plan of ideas and stressed the importance of the Conservation Commission having at least one event each quarter such as:

Fall: America Recycles Day on November 15 "I Pledge" online button to pledge to recycle; can be an electronic activity and promote on Facebook. Lead: L. Brant

Winter: February 14 Beacon Falls loves our trails: suggestion to submit photos or love notes to the Conservation Commission about why residents love the open spaces/trails, posts to Facebook and a press release to local newspapers. NEED LEAD

Early March (~March 2 annually): Read Across America Day - public school event celebrates Dr. Seuss' birthday. Suggestion to train high school volunteers (M. Opuszynski to reach out to HS) to lead an activity at Laurel Ledge on The Lorax ([www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org) for activities). M. Opuszynski suggested asking S. Zyla if Audubon had movie rights to The Lorax (PTO of Laurel Ledge often hosts family movie nights). Lead: L. Brant, assist: R. Burritt

Spring: Earth Day/Arbor Day; RiverFest/Duck Race; CT Trails Weekend  
Lead: Earth Day/Arbor Day clean up: M. Opuszynski  
Lead: RiverFest/Duck Race: T. Gutierro  
Lead: CT Trails Weekend: L. Brant

L. Brant suggested working with other groups in town to highlight these activities (ex. Beacon Falls Garden Club is interested in donating an oak tree to the town)

M. Opuszynski suggested using Earth Day as a day to clean up Lantern Ridge after the winter weather and to conduct trail maintenance to prepare for CT Trails Day in coordination with Girl Scouts.

Summer: June: Great American Backyard Campout, a suggested activity for families; publicize by electronic notification and press release to local newspaper  
Lead: L. Brant

July: Cardboard Boat Regatta NEED LEAD

L. Brant suggested challenging other town commissions and bringing it up at a Land Use Committee meeting.

R. Burrirt offered to make postings to Facebook promoting these activities.

**10. Payment of Invoices -**

- Clerical invoice –

Motion to accept Clerk Martha Melville's invoice requesting payment of \$68.75 for the September 14, 2015 meeting and associated administrative work and pay the bill as submitted: Opuszynski/Burrirt; all aye.

**11. Announcements/Adjournment**

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

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 PM: Brant/Opuszynski; all aye.

Respectfully submitted,  
Martha Melville  
Clerk

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