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Patricia O'Sullivan
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Orange Conservation Commission

High Plains Conference Room
August 7, 2019
7:00 p.m.

(Unapproved Minutes)

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Chairman Cindy Ruggeri, Vice Chairman Sharon V. Ewen, Donna Wesolowski, Robert McCorkle, Cathy Anderson, and Consultant Michael Ross

Commissioners Absent: Jonathan Clark and Kent Tullo

Staff Present: Deborah Satonick, Recording Secretary

I. Call to Order

- Chairman Ruggeri called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes - May 1, 2019 & June 5, 2019

- The Commission members tabled the approval of the May and June OCC minutes until their next meeting.

III. Financial Report

- Chairman Ruggeri reported that the department received the same dollar budget as last year. With minimal resources from the Highway Department and the Parks and Recreation Department, this dollar amount is insufficient to properly maintain the Open Space.
- It was agreed to contact Dan Lynch to discuss their maintenance plan for the Open Space. The Commission members questioned why employees in the Parks and Recreation Department are allowed to take vacations during the busiest summer months. The Commission members will also consider going before the Board of Selectmen in January to discuss the need for additional funding to maintain the Open Space.

- Chairman Ruggeri reminded the Commission that \$1300 was encumbered to pay Orange Fence Company to install the fence along the Racebrook Tract. Also, \$1500 was set aside from the grant to install rails at Wepawaug Conservation. Chairman Ruggeri will email John Cifarelli to remind him about these funds that have been earmarked for this purpose.

VI. Old Business

A. Purple Martin Grant Received

- Mr. McCorkle reported that this grant money would be used to purchase a twenty-four house colony to be installed at Ewen Preserve. It was suggested that the Boy Scouts could maintain and clean the bird houses each year.

B. Goats for Invasives

- Chairman Ruggeri emailed the Commission members articles about invasive growth. The use of goats will be considered to remove the invasives in our Open Space. While some invasive plants can be toxic to animals, there is not a concern in this application. The goats would be placed inside an electric fence for protection and short term liability insurance would be required. The OCC will appear before the Board of Selectmen in September to explain the use of goats in our Open Space.

C. Kiosk Updates

- There was a brief discussion on the use of peg board, cork board, plywood, and other materials in the kiosks. The biggest concern was that some of the materials suggested might absorb water. Plywood would require staples. Ms. Wesolowski will visit Home Depot to explore all of the options available and report back to the Commission.

D. OCC Website Updates

- Mrs. Anderson felt that the current website (OrangeConservationCommission.com) is user-friendly but very outdated. She compared our website with that of Trumbull, Westport, and Newton. Ms. Anderson will contact Jeff Capp to request an updating of the website to show current publicity, community events, and trail information. The Orange Country Fair will be advertised in Orange Patch, Orange Live, Facebook, as well as on this website. The Commission also discussed advertising flyers at the Library and the electronic backpack at the elementary schools.

V. New Business

A. 2019 Officer Vote

Ms. Ewen made a motion to nominate Cindy Ruggeri as Chairman of the OCC Commission, seconded by Mr. McCorkle. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

Ms. Ruggeri made a motion to nominate Sharon Ewen as Vice Chairman of the OCC Commission, seconded by Mr. McCorkle. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

Ms. Ruggeri made a motion to nominate Deborah Satonick as Secretary of the OCC Commission, seconded by Mr. McCorkle. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

B. Signs for Racebrook and Biking Issues

- After much conversation, it was agreed to install the metal signage at the Racebrook Tract. The signs are “No Bikers” and “Stay on Trails.” Brian Clark from the Highway Department will help with the installation of the signs.
- Ms. Ruggeri will reach out to the Town of Woodbridge regarding the mountain bikers at the Racebrook Tract. They have marked their own trails, set up bike jumping, ride into the wetlands, and have built a bridge to go over the waterways. This has caused the erosion of some of the natural habitat. Ms. Ewen spoke with the Chief of Police regarding this trespass but was advised that there is little that can be done.
- Mr. McCorkle will change the wording of the current ordinance to restrict mountain bikers from using this Open Space. The ordinance will also reflect that the property is closed between December and May. The next step would be to go before the Board of Selectmen.

C. Wepawaug Entrance

- Chairman Ruggeri advised that John Clark has cleared this area but she would also like to have the rhododendron shrubs removed as well. A gift card was suggested to express the Commission members’ appreciation for this work.

D. Fall Hike

- It was agreed to hold the fall hike on October twelfth either at Housatonic Overlook or the Turkey Hill Preserve. The Commission will ask Anthony Zemba which location he prefers to hold this event.

E. Owl Prowl

- The Owl Prowl will be held at 7:00 p.m. on November first, with a rain date of November second. They will have a fire pit for this event.

F. Memorial Benches

- Ms. Wesolowski will check with the Town regarding the policy concerning the style of benches that can be used on Town property. Ms. Ewen would like a very simple bench that blends nicely with the natural habitat.

V1. Review of Standing Committee/Liaison Reports

- There was mention of the unsightly overgrowth at Wright's Pond. The Garden Club and the Orange Community Women have cleaned this area in the past.
- It was noted that a portion of Fred Wolfe Park is being cleared for public use. The Commission questioned whether this area would be used for passive Open Space in the future.
- Lastly, Vice Chairman Ewen wished to thank Mike Ross for his time in running the Conservation Program for Argo Camp at Camp Cedarcrest.

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah Satonick,
Recording Secretary