

2023 FEB -2 AM 8:33



Orange Conservation Commission

January 4, 2023 7:00 p.m.
High Plains Community Center – Room 8

Approved

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Chair Cathy Anderson, Donna Wesolowski, Chantelle Bunnell, Santo Galatioto, Sharon Ewen, and Scott Somerville

Commissioners Absent: Cindy Ruggeri

Staff Present: Deborah Satonick, Recording Secretary

Guests: Dr. Sharon Kahara, Assistant Professor at University of New Haven

Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and reviewed the emergency exits.

1. **Public Dialogue**

Chair Anderson introduced Dr. Kahara, who was present to observe the meeting discussion. She is considering applying for the current vacancy on the Orange Conservation Commission.

2. **Review and Approval of December Minutes**

The Commission reviewed the minutes and made a correction as was required.

*Ms. Anderson moved to approve the amended December 7, 2022 Orange Conservation Commission minutes, seconded by Mr. Galatioto. All were in favor and the motion **PASSED.***

3. **Financial Report**

Ms. Ewen reported that the Commission has expended approximately 14% of their current budget.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **Special Workshop in January to review SCRCOG map and Leadership Map**

Ms. Anderson would like to have two informal meetings, one to discuss the maps and a second to discuss publicity and Facebook, primarily with Ms. Bunnell. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to eliminate telephone numbers from the kiosks and use email as a point of contact for the OCC. Chair Anderson commended the individual stewards for their ongoing reporting about the trails on each of their respective properties.

2. Ewen Preserve Update

Ms. Ewen gave an update about the ongoing issues between the abutting property owner at 615 St. John's Drive and Ewen Preserve. The wooden bridge will be relocated by approximately three feet as a small portion of the bridge is on their property. A privacy fence installed by the abutting neighbor is on town-owned property and will eventually be moved. These matters are being handled by the First Selectman.

3. Wepawaug Historic Informational Plaque

Ms. Ewen contacted the President of the Historical Society to discuss a special sign for the 200 bicentennial. Ms. Ewen found some history on Wepawaug that might be incorporated into the signage.

There was a brief discussion about the Purple Martin membership and it was agreed to continue with the Basic Plan versus the Patron Plan for an additional year.

Mr. Galatioto made a motion to approve \$35 for the Basic Membership Plan, seconded by Ms. Bunnell. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

4. Racebrook Tract Project – Drainage and Steps

Ms. Ewen reported that the Finance Director has given permission for the release of the allocated funds to begin this project. She distributed the proposal for this project written by Hilltop Turf Landscapes. Mr. Somerville feels that the Town should review this proposal before the work begins as questions remain – “Should there be a railing for the steps, how wide are the steps, and are the proposed shrubs maintenance free?” It was agreed to entertain a motion to begin the project through Hilltop Turf Landscapes after these questions have been addressed.

Mr. Galatioto made a motion to approve the proposal for drainage and steps by Hilltop Turf Landscaping after the Commissioners' questions have been answered. Chair Anderson seconded the motion and all were in favor. The motion PASSED.

The Commission members agreed to request \$4,305 in grant money from the Orange Foundation to be used to install a notched wooden guard rail. It was also suggested that if any money is left over from the drainage and steps project it might be reallocated toward the fencing. The current sign will be moved once the work has been completed.

5. CT Trails Grant Proposals DEEP Webinar

This webinar is scheduled for January 11, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. and registration is required. It will provide an overview on the CT Recreational Trails Grant Program.

6. Status of Refurbishing Entry Signs to all Trails

Chair Anderson intends to take some pictures of the current signage and measurements will be determined for the refurbishing of the signs.

7. Status of “No Bicycling” signs at Trailheads

While bicycling, pets, and horses are allowed only at Racebrook Preserve, it was pointed out the Town Ordinance Code does not allow dogs in any of the open spaces within the town. As it is costly to revise the Town Ordinance, this matter will be duly noted and the current signage will be addressed. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding updates on the signs for all of the properties.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Resignation of Ms. Ruggeri

Ms. Ruggeri submitted her resignation letter to the First Selectman effective 1/31/2023. The Commission members will invite her back to the February meeting as a guest in order to say a “proper” goodbye and give best wishes.

2. Presentation by Mr. Blaine Sorrick

Mr. Sorrick, the UNH graduate student who has been doing research at Racebrook Preserve, will be attending their February meeting to give a presentation on the soil sampling and to discuss his findings.

REVIEW OF TRAILS AND STEWARD REPORTS

Each steward gave an update on their respective properties, including a fallen tree at Housatonic Overlook, a boulder that should be moved at Racebrook Tract, and a sink hole on the red trail. Ms. Ewen will contact Mr. Foyer will be contacted to assist with this cleanup.

Ms. Anderson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m., seconded by Ms. Ewen. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah Satonick
Recording Secretary