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May 4, 2023
TOWN CLERK

Orange Conservation Commission

April 5, 2023 7:00 p.m.

High Plains Community Center – Room 2

Approved

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Chair Cathy Anderson, Donna Wesolowski, Santo Galatioto, Sharon Kahara, and Scott Somerville

Commissioners Absent: Chantelle Bunnell and Sharon Ewen

Staff Present: Deborah Satonick, Recording Secretary

*Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., seconded by Mr. Galatioto. All were in favor and the motion **PASSED.***

1. Public Dialogue (7:55 p.m.)

Philip Piscitelli, UNH graduate student in Environmental Science, requested permission to conduct research at Racebrook Tract on the impact of the invasive vine Oriental Bittersweet on tree growth. He explained his project in detail, which will run for about three weeks in the fall. Ms. Kahara will be his point of contact and he will appear before the Commission to report his findings.

*Mr. Galatioto made a motion to approve Mr. Piscitelli's research project on invasive vine growth at Racebrook Tract, seconded by Mr. Somerville. All were in favor and the motion **PASSED.***

2. Review and Approval of March OCC Minutes

Chair Anderson made a few revisions to the minutes as needed.

*Mr. Galatioto moved to approve the March 1, 2023 Orange Conservation Commission minutes, seconded by Ms. Wesolowski. All were in favor and the motion **PASSED.***

3. Financial Report

Chair Anderson reported that no money has been spent out of the budget this month.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Ewen Preserve

Mr. Somerville will use the SCRCOG map for review of the trail that circles the pasture to determine extending the existing unmapped walkway as an established, blazed trail. He will also walk the property, make modifications as necessary, and report back.

2. Status of Historic Informational Plaque at Wepawaug

Ms. Ewen and Mr. Ross are working collaboratively to design the layout of the sign. They expect the cost of the sign to be under \$1k and it will be paid out of the existing budget.

3. Status of Racebrook Tract

The Commission was awarded the Orange Foundation Grant and will use these funds for a parking lot fence. Boulders might be temporarily placed on the side of the stairs to inhibit bikers from and walkers from using this area. Ms. Ewen is getting quotes for the entry sign and will report back at next month's meeting.

4. Status of CT Trails DEEP Grant Application for Howard Brooks Walkway

Ms. Anderson reported that she received an acknowledgment of their submission, but no decision has been made. A decision is expected by April thirteenth.

5. Status of Landscaping Below Open Space Name Signs

It was suggested that this area be edged and mulched with decorative boulders to be added. The Girl Scout Troops will be asked to volunteer to help with plantings in this area.

6. Lion's Club Mini-Grant

This grant will be used for solely for educational purposes. No award decision has been made.

7. Vandalism at Trails

Ms. Kahara is familiar with solar brand and battery-operated surveillance cameras and agreed to get some pricing. Ms. Bunnell also submitted some quotes. THP was the suggested location and prices for the equipment range from \$62-\$250. It was the consensus to purchase an inexpensive model for the initial trial period and ask the Highway Department to install the camera.

8. Revisions to Verbiage on OCC Homepage

Chair Anderson commended Ms. Wesolowski for an outstanding job in revising the OCC

homepage. Commissioners made additional suggestions to further improve the homepage, such as having site link tabs to the maps and other pertinent information. Mr. Galatioto also suggested of using a border of illustrations to depict the rules of the Open Space.

9. Status of SCRCOG maps

This is a work in progress and will be ongoing.

10. THP and Racebrook Tract Kiosk Replacement

Mr. Somerville assessed the kiosk at THP and reported that the plexiglas does not need to be replaced. Mr. Ewen will repair the kiosk at Racebrook Tract as Ms. Anderson was informed that the Town cannot do this work.

11. Orange Land Trust Request of OCC Collaboration to Blaze Trail at Paul Ode with Boy Scouts

There was a brief discussion on this topic and it was agreed that no further action will be taken at this time.

12. Development of Mission Statement, Review of By-laws and OCC Handbook

There was a brief discussion on the role of OCC in tracking town-owned property for possible purchase as Open Space. Ms. Wesolowski had a document dated 2015 listing these potential properties. It was also noted that Fred Wolfe Park has been changed from passive open space to recreational use by the Town of Orange and will no longer be under their surveillance.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Request for Use by Ms. Crandall

Ms. Anderson presented a request from Dana Crandall, Connecticut State Survey Coordinator, with her request to monitor for softwood-feeding cerambycid beetles and moths at Racebrook Tract, Fred Wolfe Park, and Housatonic Overlook. The survey process will begin in June and traps will be set up. These traps will be monitored and serviced every two weeks. She will provide the Commission with the identification results at the end of trapping season. The Commission members agreed to allow Chairman Anderson the ability to approve this request after determining an alternate location in lieu of Fred Wolfe Park.

Mr. Galatioto made a motion to allow Chairman Anderson permission to approve the request of Ms. Crandall as presented, with an alternate location to be determined in lieu of Fred Wolfe Park. Mr. Somerville seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

2. Maintenance Log for Grant Purposes

Ms. Anderson reported that Ms. Bunnell has offered to create and maintain lists of suggested and

upcoming projects for grant eligibility as well as projects completed with grant funds. This will be set up as google documents it was suggested that Ms. Bunnell give a demonstration for the Commission members on how to access the documents once the lists has been created.

3. Spring Workdays

It was agreed that the entrance to THP would be a good location for a workday, scheduled on April 29, from 9:00 am to 12 noon. Ms. Anderson would like to have a second workday at Housatonic and the date will be determined at a subsequent meeting. Chairman Anderson will make an advertising flyer for the workday and the girl scouts will be invited to join. There was also a brief discussion on the blazing of the trails with spray paint, as needed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Anderson gave an update on some of the issues surrounding 615 St. John's Drive and advised that the First Selectman is continuing to address the problems as they arise. Ms. Anderson also indicated that she will be speaking with Mr. Zeoli regarding closing the Howard Brooks Walkway as it is a potential safety issue. She further added that Mr. Zeoli provided Ms. Ewen with a list of grant-writing consultants that are available, although she is unclear if there is a fee involved.

Ms. Anderson noted that Ms. Bunnell is working with Jeff Cap on their Facebook page, and she is creating a new letterhead template with the town seal. This will be used for future letter writing.

Mr. Somerville made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m., seconded by Ms. Anderson. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah Satonick
Recording Secretary