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Patricia B. O'Sullivan
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Orange Conservation Commission

High Plains Conference Room
January 8, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Approved Minutes

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Chairman Cindy Ruggeri, Donna Wesolowski, Robert McCorkle, Cathy Anderson, and Consultant Michael Ross

Commissioners Absent: Vice Chairman Sharon V. Ewen and Kent Tullo

Staff Present: Deborah Satonick, Recording Secretary

I. Call to Order

- Chairman Ruggeri called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed emergency exits.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes - December 4, 2019

Mr. McCorkle made a motion to approve the December 4, 2019 Orange Conservation Commission minutes, seconded by Ms. Wesolowski. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

III. Financial Report

- Chairman Ruggeri reported that the current balance in the 2019 budget is \$2578.03. Payment for the Owl Prowl and the Cosco purchases for the holiday luncheon for the Highway Department and Parks and Recreation Department has yet to be paid.

VI. Old Business

A. Wepawaug Bridge Railing - Estimate

- Ms. Ewen will be getting an estimate from Orange Fence for the railing and will report back to the Commission members.

V. New Business

A. Biking Rules Signs Installation for Racebrook

- Chairman Ruggeri mentioned that the rules for Racebrook Tract located on the sign mounted on the wooden bridge make reference to the rules located in the ox shed. She suggested that a set of rules be laminated and placed in the existing shelter, which is in the location of the ox shed. A copy of the biking rules will also be put inside the kiosk. Mr. McCorkle expressed some concern that bikers or other users of the Open Space might remove the rules from the shelter in the future.

B. OCC Town Code Changes

- Chairman Ruggeri emailed Town Attorney Vincent Marino on December 11, 2019 regarding the proposed changes to the Town ordinances. She also emailed him on January 7, 2020 but has yet to hear back. She plans on calling him at his law office if she does not hear back from him shortly.

C. January BOF Meeting Presentation

- Mr. Ross will make a presentation before the Board of Finance on February 7, 2020 in attempt to secure additional money in the budget to properly maintain the Open Space. There was a lengthy discussion in preparation for this presentation.
- Chairman Ruggeri explained that their budget was drastically reduced about seven years ago as the Highway Department and Parks and Recreation was commissioned to do maintenance work in the Town's Open Space. Unfortunately, while these departments have assisted in the past with the maintenance of the Open Space, help is still needed due to constraints and time limitations with these Town departments.
- Maintenance of the Town's Open Space is essential for safety issues, emergency access needs, aesthetics, and the overall reputation of the Town of Orange. The OCC would like to hire an individual to walk the trails and do light maintenance work and clean up along with a contractor with equipment to handle bigger projects. With over 1000 acres of Open Space, additional help is required to properly maintain these areas.
- Mr. Ross discussed salary requirements for these potential positions, and asked for job quotes along with previous OCC budgets to bring to the BOF presentation. There was also a discussion about the list of priority properties for future Open Space. Mr. Ross suggested that prospective owners looking to sell or donate their property to the Town for Open Space should contact the Orange Conservation Commission members, who can then refer the property information to Mr. Zeoli.

D. Purple Martin House Order & Library Presentation

- Mr. Zeoli felt that the chosen location at Ewen Preserve for the Purple Martin House would not work as there is an issue with the depth of soil at this site location. Mr. Zeoli noted there is only four feet of topsoil with underlying ledge in this area. A new location site must be selected at Ewen Preserve.
- The Orange Conservation Commission will proceed with this project and order the Purple Martin House as they have received the actual specifications from Dennis. The birdhouse will have to be assembled and can be stored in the new garage at the Fairgrounds.
- The Menunkatuck Audubon Society will be making an informational presentation at the High Plains Community Center Cafeteria about the Purple Martins and the installation of the colony birdhouse at Ewen Preserve. The date for this presentation is Thursday, February 13, 2020.
- Chairman Ruggeri noted that the tentative date for the Bird Walk is May sixteenth, with a rain date of May thirtieth. It will be held at Turkey Hill Preserve at 7:00 am.
- Chairman Ruggeri mentioned that Ms. Ewen suggested a spreadsheet each month to record information about all of the trials. OCC members would walk the trials and update the spreadsheet on a monthly basis. It was also noted that Fred Wolfe Park will have a playground and water park, and questioned whether this parcel of land should continue to be categorized as Open Space.
- Chairman Ruggeri will go to the Case Memorial Library to remove the Christmas tree on display from last month.

E. Scout Project - New Wooden Sign at Split of red/green Trails at Housatonic Overlook

- Ben Cap made a presentation for his Life Scout Project to repair a wooden directional trail sign. After some discussion, it became clear that there might be two signs in need of repair. Ms. Anderson will meet with Ben to walk the trail either this Sunday or next to determine the location of the two signs and to also determine the best type of signage for each of these locations.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah Satonick,
Recording Secretary