



Orange Conservation Commission

March 1, 2023 7:00 p.m.
High Plains Community Center – Room 4

(Unapproved)

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 7:02 p.m., seconded by Mr. Somerville. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

1. **Public Dialogue**

Blaine Sorrick presented his soil sample findings and shared his statistical data with the Commission members. Chair Anderson thanked Blaine for his presentation and invited him back to do additional research in the future. Dr. Kahara mentioned that Blaine is assisting with the housing for water depth loggers at Racebrook Tract. These devices will monitor the depth and flow of water and provide valuable data on nutrients in the water and soil.

[Mr. Galatioto arrived at approximately 7:09 p.m.]

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

Ms. Wesolowski moved to approve the February 4, 2023 Orange Conservation Commission minutes, seconded by Mr. Galatioto. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

3. **Financial Report**

Chair Anderson stated that she will review the Financial Report with Ms. Ewen as it appears that there is money in the budget to be used for expenditures prior to the end of the fiscal year. The discussion of the Financial Report was tabled until next month's meeting.

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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED FOR RECORDS
2023 MAR -3 AM 10:24
Michelle Ryan
TOWN CLERK

OLD BUSINESS

1. Status of Ewen Preserve

Chair Anderson reported that there are orange stakes in the ground to show the updated boundary lines based on a new survey of 615 St. John's Drive. Mr. Galatioto would have liked to see metal spikes installed as the orange stakes can be easily removed. Chair Anderson reminded the Commission that this dispute is being handled by the First Selectman and the role of the Commission members is to monitor the open space area, which they will continue to do. She also suggested that she have another informal meeting at her home to address the trails at Ewen Preserve.

2. Status of Historic Informational Plaque at Wepawaug

As Ms. Ewen is heavily involved with this project, the discussion was tabled until next month's meeting.

4. Status of Racebrook Tract

The Commission members agreed that Racebrook Tract looks good. The Orange Foundation Grant for the parking lot fence has been submitted and the Commission members commended Ms. Ewen and Ms. Bunnell for their hard work with these grants. Ms. Anderson will make the necessary adjustments to the kiosk, and she will order sufficient plexiglass to fix any other kiosks that might need to be repaired.

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

Ms. Anderson advised that both Ms. Ewen and Ms. Bunnell worked collectively to submit the application for the DEEP grant on time. This grant money will be used for the Howard Brooks Walkway. The footings are intact and the estimate from Orange Fence Company for the wooden structure, including demolition, is \$98k. The grant would cover 80% of the project, which must be completed within eighteen months. The Commission should know the outcome of their grant application within sixty days.

The discussion regarding the entry signs to the trail, including the appropriate landscaping below the signs, will be tabled until next month's meeting.

6. Lion's Club Mini-Grant Application

Ms. Anderson completed and submitted this grant application for the full \$500 to be used for educational purposes.

7. Vandalism at Trails

This discussion was tabled until the next OCC meeting.

8. Possible Development of Trail at Fred Wolfe Park

It was agreed by the Commission members that the uses of Fred Wolfe Park are no longer under the bylaws of Open Space and no further discussion will take place regarding this property.

9. OCC Attire

Kathy will be purchasing reflective vests and caps/visors for those members who wish to wear them.

10. Status of Menunkatuck Audubon Society Purple Martins Presentation

The Purple Martins Presentation was put temporarily on hold as no presenter for the program is available in the month of March.

11. Revisions to Verbiage on Homepage of OCC Website

Ms. Anderson suggested that the Commission members look at the OCC website homepage as it is very outdated. Ms. Wesolowski offered to look at other towns' websites for comparisons and suggestions.

12. Status of SCRCOG Maps

Ms. Anderson said that this is a long-term project that will be ongoing.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Damage of THP Kiosk

Ms. Anderson believes that the kiosk was damaged due to a storm, and it will be repaired.

2. Racebrook Tract Kiosk

Ms. Anderson stated that the plexiglass will be replaced on the back side, with a hinge, for the posting of notices.

3. Clearing and Blazing Trail at Paul Ode

Ms. Anderson explained that the Orange Land Trust would like to clear and blaze a trail at Paul Ode with the collaboration of the OCC. After some discussion, it was agreed that this matter will be left to the discretion of the Town Highway Department.

4. Discussion of Mission Statement, OCC Handbook, and By-Laws

Ms. Anderson distributed copies of the by-laws to the Commission members. No further action was done at this time.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Anderson received an email from a resident who would like to make some bowls using the wood from a downed tree. There was a discussion about driving a vehicle into the open space and Dr. Kahara noted that downed trees provide homes and nutrients for certain wildlife. It was also noted that this request is quite different than a logger cutting trees for profit. After further discussion, it was agreed to refer this matter to the Parks and Recreation Department.

Ms. Anderson attended the Garden Club meeting with Sharon on 2/13 to be introduced to the members of this group. She also provided an updated Membership List to the Commission members. Lastly, Ms. Anderson confirmed the OCC Gmail account with Mr. Mongillo, the Town IT Director.

Mr. Galatioto made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m., seconded by Mr. Somerville. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah Satonick
Recording Secretary