

Commission on Conservation & Agriculture
MINUTES

Regular Meeting of September 17, 2019

Present	Absent	Public	Staff
Elisabeth Holder	Larry Owen		Christine Raczka Marquis
Jane Brawerman	Barbara Schukoske		
Bob Daniels	James Miller		
Brian Gartner			
Michael Thomas			
Kate Miller			
David Bauer			
Ellen Lukens			
Katherine Owens			

A. Call to Order—Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

B. Accept the Agenda

The Chairwoman asked if there was a motion to accept the agenda. Brian made the motion to accept the agenda and change F-4 and add Source to Sea Update. The motion was seconded by Bob Daniels and passed unanimously

C. Public Forum

D Approval of Minutes

The Chairwoman asked if anyone on the Commission wanted to make any changes to the minutes. Brian made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Bob Daniels. David Bauer, Ellen Lukens, Katherine Owens, and Kate Miller abstained from voting. The motion was approved by the other voting members

E. Request for Comment

1. Disc Golf

Christine presented an idea to add a disc golf course to one of the parks/open space properties in Middletown. She and Joe Samolis thought that this is another way to increase public use of Middletown's parks and open space. She answered the commission member's questions about maintenance and the commission suggested several parks including Veterans, Smith, Tyman, Wilcox, and Crystal Lake.

The commission discussed other passive recreation options for some of Middletown's parks and open spaces. Kate Miller suggested having a field dedicated to ultimate Frisbee and working with local youth/teen programming to advertise and determine what would be the most useful. David Bauer suggested adding a walking trail to Pat Kidney and using some of the parks bond to create the trail.

2. Urban Farm Lease and Workshop

Christine presented the proposal from the North End Action Team (NEAT) to the commission. The commission would like soil testing done on the property, that they are not using pesticides, assurances that the farming is done is a sustainable way and to encourage the community to use native plants.

3. City Planner Updates

Christine gave an update on the Planning Department's search for a new City Planner. The department has hired a new planner.

4. Eversource Updates

Christine updated the Commission on her conversations with Eversource about their work around Dooley Pond. The work has been delayed until next spring.

5. Clarification on bridge lighting

Christine updated the Commission on the Public Works plan for the bridge lighting. She said that according to Chris Holden, Deputy Director of Public Works, there is no current plan to update the lights on the Portland Bridge. The only change to this would be to add LED lights similar to the ones that they have put in the street lamps. Commissioner Kate Miller asked if Public Works had considered the most recent recommendation from the American Medical Association in regards to the type and intensity of the proposed LED lights. Christine said that she had only discussed the lights with Chris Holden from an ecological perspective.

6. Guida mowing update

Christine updated the commission on the mowing at the Guida property. Ron Hajek hayed/mowed the Guida property and is interested in doing it in the future. The commission would like to thank him for his help. Commissioner Bob Daniels said he would reach out and thank Ron Hajek for his help.

7. Open Space Bond Update

Christine Raczka gave the commission an update on the Open Space Bond. She also showed drafts of two flyers that she created to promote the bond referendum. Commissioner David Bauer expressed concern over the wording and asked that the legal department review the flyers.

8. Timber Management

Christine Raczka updated the commission on her conversation with DEEP and Eric Hansen, Certified Forester about the management plan that was drafted for the Wilcox property. Commissioner David Bauer made a motion to engage the management plan and have it be executed by Eric Hansen. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bob Daniels and passed unanimously.

F. Officer and Committee Reports

1. Chairman's report

i Update of POCD

The Chairwoman gave an update on the POCD and listening sessions.

ii Commission Vacancies

The Chairwoman gave an update on the commission vacancies. She stressed that the Commission struggled to reach a quorum and that their Judy Konopauk wants to be on the commission and has been waiting to hear back since September. The Chairwoman has written a letter of support to the Mayor but hasn't heard anything since September 2019. She also stressed that they need people to come forward and volunteer and that they need to be appointed quickly so they don't lose interest.

Commissioner David Baur said that he would reach out to the Mayor's office. He also suggested creating a recruiting committee which has been successful for other organizations. The Chairwoman thought that would be a good idea for next year.

iii. Rocky Hill "Lend a Paw" Volunteers

The Chairwoman told the commission that Rocky Hill High School was sending a dozen high schoolers to volunteer at the Nature Gardens to help maintain the trails on October 10.

iv. Rockfall Foundation Letter

The Chairwoman told the Commission that the Rockfall Foundation had written to her and explained that they are planning to have their forest land harvested for timber. They wanted to know if we were interested in having the neighboring city owned parcel harvested. The Commission said no since we do not have a management plan.

2. Trails Committee

i. Trails Work for Fall

The Trails committee is planning on meeting to discuss work for the fall.

3. Agriculture Committee

i. Farm Market and Stand Ordinance Update

The Agricultural committee is waiting for the new planner to start to begin to work on the Farm Market and Stand Ordinance.

ii. Hayfields Management

The committee discussed the Guida property and other properties that would need to be managed in the future. The committee stressed that hay management will become more difficult in the future since small farms are going out of business.

4. Outreach Committee

i. Future Events

The committee discussed future events and potential partnerships including working with Youth Services. Brian expressed a desire to add signage to open space trails about the plant and animal species in the area. Jane suggested applying for a grant through the Rockfall Foundation.

iii. Source to Sea

The committee updated the Commission on Source to Sea. The event has been advertised locally.

5. Open Space Management Committee

NA

6. Open Space Acquisition Committee

i. Livingston Appraisal

David Bauer made a motion to go into executive session to discuss the purchasing of a new open space property. The motion was seconded by Brian Gartner and passed unanimously. David Bauer made a motion to leave executive session and the motion was seconded by Mike Thomas. The motion passed unanimously.

ii. Country Club Rd

Christine updated the commission on a homeowner who approached the City and wanted to donate land that was next to City owned open space. David Bauer made a motion to endorse receiving the property pending a site inspection. Kate Miller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

G. Old Business

1. Kleen Energy Property

2. Landfill Trail

Christine updated the commission on the progress she made with the Landfill Trail grant.

3. Open Space Regulations

Kate Miller updated the Commission on the open space regulations discussions.

4. Red Maple Swamp

H. New Business

I Member Forum

NA

J. Adjournment

Brian made a motion to end the meeting. The motion was seconded by Bob and passed unanimously.