

Parks and Natural Resources Committee (PNRC)

Tuesday, January 25, 2022, 7:00 PM

**Special [virtual] Meeting**

**Minutes -- FINAL**

**1. Call to order and roll call**

The was called to order at 7:01 PM

Attending: Jim Morrow (Chair), Ken Feathers (secretary), Vicky Wetherell, Charlotte Pyle, Tom Harrington, Sue Harrington, Juliana Barrett (Alt.), Miranda Davis (Alt.), Quentin Kessel (Cons. Com. Rep.)

Town Staff Present: Jennifer Kaufman

Not attending: all attended

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**2.1** Minutes of the November 16, 2021, meeting were approved (moved Kessel, second Pyle)

**3. Opportunity for Public comment**

No members of the general public were present.

**4. Old Business**

**4.1 Park Updates**

Sue Harrington reported that it appears the Merrow Meadow field was completely mowed for the second year in a row. Kaufman reported that the Public Works department staff in charge are attuned to the desire to only mow half of Merrow Meadow and Mount Hope. A discussion ensued regarding mis-communication issues and continuing to work out staff availability to mow, usually after first frost, which was late this year.

Harrington also requested that the Town consider plowing the paved path at Merrow Meadow, since it is heavily used year-round and snow accumulation turning to ice makes it dangerous. Crandall Park in Tolland was cited as an example.

**4.2 Pollinator Pathway**

Pyle reported that the recent pollinator pathway Ecotype Project presentation was well done but there is a lot of information to digest, and she wants to dig deeper into how the conclusions are supported by the data. A recording is available (Secretary: at <https://ctnofa.org/> ?). There is then the question of what we do with the information. Feathers suggested that if anyone wished to establish a founder's plot to propagate local native seed the Town should consider making appropriate town land available to support this activity, without entailing any other town-specific resource commitment.

**4.3 CT Trail Finder**

Town staff reported that all the parks have been uploaded, but not all may yet have been reviewed and finally posted. If any committee members explore the site and see that errors have crept into the postings, please let Jennifer know.

**5. New Business**

**5.1 Parks Programming**

The agenda has the tentative schedule for the Spring 2022 recreation brochure. There is still time if someone wants to volunteer to lead an additional activity.

Programs anticipated:

- Tom and Sue Harrington again will offer their “traditional” “Over in the Meadow” scavenger hunt on Mothers Day
- Chris Kueffner and Lynn Stoddard will offer an Earth Weekend program on sustainable forestry at Storrs Adventure Park
- Aaron King will lead a spring migrant bird walk at Mount Hope park
- There will be a trails Day guided hike in Sawmill Brook/Wolf Rock preserve\*
- Plein Air in the parks will continue to be offered.

\*Staff noted that John Hankins is not available to lead the proposed Trails Day Sawmill Brook walk, and Jennifer is seeking a substitute.

Sue Harrington reported that the winter tracking program was held two weeks ago, but there was no fresh snow so many activities were done indoors. 7 attended, but not the same 7 who had signed up.

### **5.2 Sustainable CT Re-certification – Multi-committee Virtual Meeting February 9, 2022. 7 PM**

Town staff noted the kickoff for this re-certification effort, and solicited participation; Miranda Davis, at least, was available to attend. Invitations will go out later, this was more of a save-the-date announcement. In answer to a question, Kaufman indicated that the lead for Town staff was Ginny Walton, and her role was support.

### **5.3 Management Plans**

The agenda has a link to the draft Mt. Hope Park Management Plan. This plan was prepared by UConn students for free. Some aspects of the plan were discussed. It was decided that at a subsequent meeting there needed to be a focused review of the goals and objectives language, as a model for use in other management plans. Feathers will revive some draft language from an effort derailed by Covid and forward it to town staff.

## **6. Executive session in accordance with CGS section 1200(6)(D) (old agenda item 8)**

A change in order of the agenda was proposed

The committee voted to enter executive session at 7:50 (move Wetherell, second Kessel)

The committee exited executive session at 8:25 (move Wetherell, second Barrett)

There were no motions necessary after the executive session discussion

## **7. Communications (old agenda item 6)**

### **7.1 Mountain View Acres Subdivision Modification**

Town staff reported 4 lots were merged into 1 large lot. These are the lots closest to the Coventry Road open space. No issues are anticipated because of this change.

### **7.2 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Capitol [sic] Improvement Project**

Town staff reported that the town is budgeting for developing a master parks and recreation plan. The agenda includes links to some examples for the committee to review.

### **7.3 Recreational Trails Grant Program Update**

Town staff reported this has been funded for \$80,000 as part of a larger grant application in collaboration with CFPA. CFPA indicated that our subproject, with its many transportation aspects, added good value to the overall grant application. The grant includes wayfinding at bus stops on Rt. 195 and a pedestrian

crossing improvement for Rt. 89 near the elementary school. The net result will result in a potential trail loop between Mansfield Center and Spring Hill that is accessible by public transportation.

**7.4 Long-Term Strategy and Educational Campaign for the Control of Fanwort in Eagleville Lake.**

Staff reported that DEEP has finally given a contract for this activity. NE Aquatic Resources will do most of the work. A link to the submittal is in the agenda.

**7.5 Airline Trail State Park Master Plan**

Staff called attention to this plan and noted that although trail does not pass through Mansfield Jean Davis is looking for ways to creatively connect the Airline trail to other trail systems in the region.

**Other items (not on agenda) Other PZC/Wetlands activity:**

**Clear Mountain Capital [CMC] – four parcels located at 497 Middle Turnpike and Cedar Swamp Road.**

Town staff reported that the Golf Course project has withdrawn its wetlands application and will be redesigning and resubmitting.

**Haven Campus Communities property**

Town staff noted that the Two Steps hearing closes February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**8. Reports from Members (old agenda item 7)**

Barrett reported multiple sightings of a bobcat near the Dorwart Preserve.

Davis noted well used trails on a property on Monticello, and discussion ranged to the status of the various local preserved properties in that area, their connections to Moss Sanctuary, and their status as accessible to the public but not as publicized as the main parks and preserves.

**9. Future Meetings**

In answer to a question, Town staff noted that the change in schedule for this meeting was due to scheduling conflicts because the Monday holiday shifted other meetings (PZC/Wetlands). Future meetings will be on the schedule adopted, and next year's adopted schedule will include adjustment for months where this conflict arises.

**10. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 PM by consensus (moved T. Harrington, seconded Barrett)

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ken Feathers, Secretary