

# Commission on Conservation & Agriculture



Chairperson	Brian Gartner	
Vice-Chair	James Miller	Michael Maier
Members	Michael Thomas	Kate Miller
	Jane Brawerman	Liz Holder
	David Bauer	Bob Daniels
	Barbara Schukoske	Vacant
	Vacant	
Alternates	Ellen Lukens	Judy Konopka
Staff	James Sipperly, Environmental Planner	

## REGULAR MEETING Minutes

**DATE:** Tuesday, January 18, 2022

**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.

Meeting was held online. The public had access to the meeting by:

1. Going to <https://webex.com> and joining the meeting using the appropriate meeting number and password
2. Launching the WebEx application and joining the meeting using the appropriate meeting number and password  
Via telephone at 1-408-418-9388 and the appropriate access code

**Meeting Number/Access Code:** 2347 398 8911      **Event Password:** Conservation

In attendance: Commissioners Elisabeth Holder, Brian Gartner, Bob Daniels, Jane Brawerman, Barbara Schukoske, Michael Thomas, Kate Miller, Jim Miller and Mike Maier

Staff in Attendance. James Sipperly, Environmental Planner.

Public In attendance: None.

### A. Call to Order

Chairperson L. Holder called the meeting to order at 7:29pm

Some Commission members had a difficult time logging in. Some log on's were successful after multiple attempts.

### B. Accept the Agenda

Motion: Modify the agenda to add items Election of Officers after Public Forum, delete open space report and West Street issues under Chair's, and add Annual Report and 2022 Goals. Moved by B. Gartner; seconded by J. Brawerman, passed unanimously.

### C. Public Forum

None.

### Election of Officers

L. Holder stated that she is ready for a break serving as chairperson. L. Holder then opened nominations.

B. Gartner stated that he would consider staying on as chairman moving forward. Motion: To nominate B. Gartner as chairman; seconded by B. Schukoske. L. Holder asked three times if there are any nominations from the floor. None being heard L. Holder closed nominations. Vote was called and the vote was unanimously.

L. Holder opened nominations for Vice-Chairman. J. Miller stated that he would be willing to serve as Vice Chairman for one year. Motion: To nominate J. Miller as vice Chairman. Moved by L. Holder; seconded by K. Miller. L. holder asked three times if there was any other nominations from the floor. Hearing none, L. holder closed nominations. Vote was called and it was unanimously.

L. Holder opened nominations for Secretary which has always been staff. Motion: To nominate J. Sipperly as Secretary. Moved by L. Holder; seconded by B. Gartner. L. holder asked three times if any other nominations are from the floor. Hearing none, the vote was cast unanimously.

**D. Approval of Minutes:**

**1. Minutes of the November 16, 2021 Regular Meeting**

The minutes of November 16, 2021 were reviewed. Some people received them and others did not. The minutes were attached as a "hyperlink". Motion: To table the minutes of November 16, 2022. Moved by L. Holder; seconded by B. Gartner approved unanimously.

**E. Request for Comment**

**1. Review of Atkins Street Open Space Parcel, Pleasant View Associates.**

M. Kozikowski added the information as a "Hyperlink". L. Holder reported that the Open Space Subcommittee met and voted 2 to 1 for acquisition. K. Miller asked who voted no and why and L. Holder responded that it was E. Lukens because she was concerned of the price, which is what it appraised for. L. Holder reported that there are paved trails which are heavily used and this parcel is adjacent to other open space parcels. M. Maier asked about open space in general. J. Sipperly reported on the costs for maintaining open space, commercial /industrial land and residential lands.

K. Miller stated that we look at criteria and values, GIS Assessments, and apply rankings for making a rational recommendation for purchase or not. B. Gartner stated that we should not consider the purchase price here. We should look at this through a conservation lens only. Others will discuss and agree to a purchase price by contract and using appraisals. J. Miller stated that the parcel is a narrow piece with a lot of road frontage. He would not want to see a row of houses there and stated that it is highly susceptible to development. B. Gartner concurred with J. Miller.

Motion: That the Commission approve the Atkins Street Open Space Purchase even though we are concerned with the high price and request that every effort be made to secure additional outside funds. Moved by K. Miller; seconded by J. Brawerman, approved unanimously. M. Thomas abstained.

**F. Officers and Committee Reports**

**1. Chair's Report**

**i. Annual Report**

L. Holder sent out draft a draft of her annual report. J. Brawerman would like to see more detail regarding the ag-grant program. J. Miller commented that the summary tables do not add up. L. Holder will modify the report accordingly.

**ii. 2022 Goals**

L. Holder also drafted goals for 2022. Commission members were asked to review them and get back to her with any comments.

**2. Trails Committee**

**i. Bridges at Guida**

Both bridges have been constructed at Guida. L. Holder thanked J. Miller and M. Thomas for working very hard on this. The bridges look great and work really well. J. Brawerman added her thanks as well.

L. Holder turned the meeting over to newly elected Chairman B. Gartner.

B. Gartner thanked everyone involved, J. Miller, M. Thomas and J. Sipperly.

Bob Daniels stated that he senses there is a lot of good happening and hope it continues.

**3. Agriculture Committee**

**i. Ag Program/Grant**

B. Daniels reported that there is a lot of good things happening moving forward. We received 8 submissions. As a result of a meeting with Liz, Mark, Bob, J. Miller and J. Sipperly some changes came about. The city attorneys weighed in on the process and made some adjustments to the form. This grant process will be more of a reimbursable grant, not an out right grant loan.

B. Daniels stated that once the grant is approved, they will enter some sort of contract with the city. J. Miller stated that the applicants should be paid up with city taxes and should be within the city limits. B. Daniels said that if need be, we can interview the applicants as well. The project should be completed in one year from approval.

B. Daniels stated that there is \$157,844 being requested and we set aside \$125,000 originally. Possibly we can meet that limit amount in this grant round. Discussion ensued.

J. Brawerman stated that there are a lot of comments being made about the evaluation criteria and perhaps we should have an outside person to assist with the process. A list will be completed by the ag committee soon. J. Sipperly suggested that maybe the applicants can go to another funding source, like a local bank and obtain funds so that they can be later reimbursed from us.

#### **4. Outreach Committee**

##### **i. Conservation Corner update**

J. Konopka said that she has two offers for writing articles. M. Maier is working on an article identifying trees. There should be a goal to get the trail guide updated. K. Miller stated that there are so many changes that we should get a person to just work on the trail guide. J. Sipperly described the current Land Use Office. Gary Middleton was hired as the Assistant Planner and is working on doing a comprehensive open space inventory update.

J. Brawerman said she would be happy to put the conservation corner on the Middletown Eye. B. Gartner suggested copying J. Brawerman after it goes first to the Middletown Press.

##### **ii. Other initiatives**

J. Konopka is looking to get the trails in the trail guide onto alltrails.com and other trails website. M. Kozikowski found some old trails data in the GIS system. He will work on moving forward with assistance on this when the department becomes better staffed. Furthermore, she would like to leverage her facebook page to look for volunteers for various projects.

#### **5. Open Space Management Committee**

##### **i. Wilcox & Guida Management Plans**

Discussion ensued regarding how these plans should be updated and implemented. Hiring a consultant was discussed as well as using interns. J. Sipperly will reach out to the consultant who drafted the plan one more time. Discussion ensued.

Motion: That we suggest to the Land Use Department to find a consultant to get this task moving and expend what resources are needed. Moved by K. Miller; seconded by B. Daniels, approved unanimously

The Wilcox plan is 2018 and the Guida property needs a whole new plan. A RFP would have to be requested to do a new plan.

#### **6. Open Space Acquisition Committee**

##### **i. Property Updates (Sunshine Realty, Atkins Street)**

J. Sipperly reported that the Sunshine Realty property is off the table and that it is staying in the family. B. Daniels will ask them about development rights and get back to us.

Atkins Street property is being appraised and is moving forward with reviews.

#### **G. Old Business**

##### **1. Tri-town and Land Trust ATV issue proposal**

Nothing new. D. Brown may be working on this.

##### **2. Red Maple Swamp Environmental Review Team Assessment**

The CT RC&D staff are working on a schedule to conduct the review.

#### **H. New Business**

1. Natural Resource Conservation Service grants for Agricultural Conservation Easements. Staff sent this via email.

**I. Member Forum**

J. Brawerman sent out an Urban Ag Webinar from the Dept. of Ag.

J. Miller reported that we need to keep clean Ravine Park and reported that tires were dumped on /bear Hill Road near the Katchen Coley trail. Staff will forward this to Public Works.

J. Brawerman reported the Merriam Property off Middlefield Street wants to start a x-mas tree farm and we should monitor how the property is/will be used.

**J. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn at 9:49pm, Moved by J. Konopka and seconded by L. Holder passed unanimously.