

Commission on Conservation & Agriculture



Chairperson	Elisabeth Holder ('22)	
Vice-Chair	Brian Gartner ('23)	
Members	Michael Thomas ('20)	Kate Miller ('23)
	Jane Brawerman ('23)	James Miller ('23)
	Katharine Owens ('22)	Bob Daniels ('22)
	Barbara Schukoske ('23)	David Bauer ('22)
	Vacant	
Alternates	Ellen Lukens ('23)	Judy Konopka ('22)
Staff	Marek Kozikowski, AICP, City Planner	

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, April 20, 2021
TIME: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting was held online. Public Access was provide 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
3. Via telephone at 1-408-418-9388 and the appropriate access code
Meeting Number/Access Code: 1298451316
Event Password: Conservation

In attendance: Commissioners Elisabeth Holder, Brian Gartner, Bob Daniels, James Miller, Katherine Owens, K. Miller, and Barbara Schukoske. Marek Kozikowski, City Planner.

Public In attendance: Donna Drouin.

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:14pm.

B. Accept the Agenda

A motion to accept the agenda was made by K. Owens and seconded by B. Gartner passed unanimously.

C. Public Forum

None.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of Minutes from the March 16, 2021 Meeting

E. Holder mentioned a small revision to the NRG section in the Chair's Report to modify as follows, "...she had the opportunity to speak...". A motion to approve the minutes incorporating the changes made by B. Gartner and seconded by B. Daniels passed 6-0; B. Brawerman abstained.

E. Request for Comment

1. 49 Fedex Drive- Truck trailer parking expansion.

M.Kozikowski described the project that is pending before both the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency. He is anticipating comments on the proposal from the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District who was invited on a site visit to the property. A discussion ensued.

A motion to make the following comments on the proposal made by K. Owens and seconded by James Miller passed unanimously.

The comments are as follows:

1. The applicant should demonstrate best practices in low-impact development in stormwater management and should identify which measures they will adopt into the plan.
2. The Commission expresses concern regarding the effect of the proposal on the Sawmill Brook stream corridor noting that this is a sensitive environmental area. The Plan of Conservation and Development includes this area as a greenway corridor.
3. The Commission is concerned with the amount of new impervious surfaces and the applicant should demonstrate compliance with the Mattabesset Watershed Management Plan.
4. The Commission finds the alternative locations described in the wetlands report to be preferable to the proposed location. The applicant should explain why those locations were abandoned.
5. The results of the Natural Diversity Database impact report should be considered.

2. OSWA Grant Compliance.

M.Kozikowski reported that the committee met to discuss assembling the information needed for compliance reports. He submitted a sample compliance report to the State for the Wilcox property and they found it accessible. He will be assembling reports for the other properties. He will also be ordering new DEEP recognition signs to be installed where they are missing.

F. Officers and Committee Reports

1. Chairman's Report

i. Red Maple research group

No update. They are holding to schedule a meeting to prepare a detailed map to present to Common Council.

ii. Organizing stewardship

E. Holder was contacted by Andrew White who was cleaning up Ravine Park. She suggested that he be the steward of the property. As steward he would be in charge of organizing cleanups and reporting problems including problems with the trail.

2. Trails Committee

i. Upcoming trail work

E. Holder reported that all trail work has been put on hold so that time can be used to address the OSWA grant compliance issues.

ii. Update on ATV's at Wilcox

J. Miller reported that none of the solutions have been implemented. M. Kozikowski reached out to Public Works and is waiting for a reply. He and E. Holder will follow up again with Public Works.

3. Agriculture Committee

i. Farm survey working group

No update.

ii. Letter to City officials

B. Daniels sent a letter to the Mayor that outlines the concerns from the agricultural group. M. Kozikowski reached out to schedule a meeting.

4. Outreach Committee

i. 2021 Goals

B. Gartner reported that a Trails Day will be held on June 5th. He and J. Miller will be leading groups. The event will be limited to 15 participants per group. If more than 30 people sign up, he requested that another Commission sign up to be a co-leader.

ii. Other Outreach

K. Owens reported that they are working on the third article on Conservation Corner which will be discussing aquatic invasive species. They are looking for ideas for additional topics for future articles.

M. Kozikowski reported that the department put in an appropriation request to fund this year's invasive species removal along the Mattabeset and Connecticut Rivers that was previously presented by Kelsey Wentling, Connecticut River Conservancy.

5. Open Space Management Committee

i. Utilizing bond money for maintenance

M. Kozikowski suggested using some of the bond money to develop the open space plan. The Commission discussed seeking funds from the unused salaries from the vacant Environmental Specialist position.

6. Open Space Acquisition Committee

i. Pending Properties (Mckiernan, Sunshine Realty, Westlake Drive)

M. Kozikowski reported that he received an appraisal for the property Sunshine Realty property and he is consulting with the Mayor to prepare to make an offer.

M. Kozikowski reported that an offer was rejected for the Westlake Drive property and the owner suggested selling the two smaller parcels along the river. These properties are in a flood zone and floodway. The Commission discussed the proposal and M. Kozikowski would investigate further.

ii. South Plumb Road

M. Kozikowski reported that the city has not closed on the property. One of the owners reached out requesting an open space sign put on the property recognizing the family. The Commission discussed the proposal.

M. Kozikowski reported that Fair Weather Acres reached out to lease this property. The Commission discussed expressing concerns about the use of pesticides on the property and desire to lease to a small farmer or possibly use as a community gardens.

iii. OSWA Grant- Majestic Oaks- Wilson Property Update

No update.

G. Old Business

1. Timber Management and Southern Border Safety

No update.

H. New Business

1. Meeting Time

The Commission discussed moving the scheduled meeting time to 6:30pm. M. Kozikowski will look into the process and requirements within the Charter and Bylaws to make such change.

2. Funds for Improvements at Forest City Farms

The Commission discussed the use of the open space bond money to assist the tenant on improvements on the city property. B. Daniels suggested that there may be other opportunities to assist that does not utilize the bond money.

I. Member Forum

J. Brawerman reported that she was approached by someone looking for gardening space at the Senior Center. She will reach out to Cathy Lechowicz to assist this person. The property is not open space and is not under the purview of the Commission.

K. Owens reported that she received a letter from the Middlesex Land Trust regarding the Highland Pond Preserve and a meeting scheduled at the same time as the next Commission meeting. E. Holder reported that she spoke to David Brown, Middlesex Land Trust and the meeting is for informational purposes and no action will be taken at the meeting. They will be discussing a study to be conducted to assess the conditions of the dam that holds the pond.

J. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn made by J. Miller and seconded by K. Owens passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.