

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	

SPECIAL MEETING REVISED MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, May 11, 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: 1294505200
Event Password: Conservation

In attendance: Commissioners Elisabeth Holder, Brian Gartner, Bob Daniels, James Miller, Katherine Owens, Kate Miller, Jane Brawerman, Barbara Schukoske, Michael Thomas, Judy, Konopka, and Ellen Lukens.

Staff in Attendance. Marek Kozikowski, City Planner.

Public In attendance: Donna Drouin.

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm.

B. Discussion on Commission's recommendations on the use of \$250,000 Open Space Bond Money.

The Commission held a discussion on the scope of the activities that can utilize the \$250,000 of open space bond money in accordance with the council resolution. The commission further discussed potential projects that could be funded by the bond money. The Commission identified four priority projects and took votes on each priority as follows:

A motion to determine a cost estimate to move forward with the implementation of the Wilcox Management Plan made by K. Miller and seconded by B. Gartner passed unanimously.

A motion to move forward with a pilot project for invasive species removal at the Guida Conservation Area made by B. Gartner and seconded by E. Lukens passed unanimously.

A motion for the Agriculture Committee to develop a process and plan to distribute funds in support of the agricultural community made by B. Daniels and seconded by K. Owens passed unanimously.

A motion for the Trails committee to identify priority needs for projects to address major areas of concerns beyond the scope of volunteer effort made by J. Miller and seconded by B. Schukoske passed unanimously.

C. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn made by J. Konopka and seconded by B. Gartner passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm.

J. Miller's Comments

Ideas on how to use funds authorized in the 2019 Bond Issue on Open Space to "Support the Mission of the Commission on Conservation and Agriculture"

As I review what has been submitted before the meeting, the suggestions fall into the following major categories:

1. Access and education: Signage, trail improvements,
2. Agriculture investment in existing or future farming on City property, and maintenance of productivity.
3. Management and Maintenance: Invasive control, stewardship inspections, addressing misuse, grant eligibility, planning
4. Establish a foundation to "perpetuate the Commission's vision", including an education component. The listing of individual ideas is below, in no particular order.
 - Control Invasive plants in City owned properties
 - Improvement to established trails
 - Improvement to City owned agriculture land to maintain productivity (for example, regular trimming around fields to keep them from steadily shrinking)cutting
 - Annual stewardship inspections of City owned property to identify encroachments, misuse
 - Required activities to maintain grant eligibility
 - Open Space management planning
 - Set aside an agreed upon amount for future farm development activities at existing or new farms in the City
 - Help Gabe Russo with needed infrastructure that will be permanent on the city land he farms.
 - Make some signage explaining features at some of the more interesting sites we own.
 - Make small "City of Middletown conservation land" markers to delineate city property along trails and to increase recognition of our holdings and our work.
 - Add gravel or thick wood chip layers at entrances or other areas that get very muddy from overuse -- the entrance to Guidas, some spots at the Nature Gardens, the North End boat launch.
 - If we do acquire the Red Maple Swamp, keep in mind the idea of installing some boardwalks and signs to give safe and informative access.
 - Foot bridges are needed at Guida's where the Blue and Red Trails cross streams. I know these have been opposed in the past as changing the natural environment. Unfortunately, people are piling up downed limbs to create crossings. This causes damming of the streams and widening of the streambeds leading to more changes and damage than the bridges would. On the Blue Trail this widening has caused someone to create another crossing with downed limbs upstream, with the damming occurring there also. I purpose 2 bridges 4 foot wide and returning the stream beds to natural flow.
 - There could also be signs about respecting the free flow of the waters for wildlife and all to enjoy. (or perhaps signage to highlight natural features and educate about conservation practices)
 - Let's use the \$250,000 to start an investment in our community. Something that will be self-sustaining that will *actively* perpetuate our committee's vision. This may look like the following (examples just to demonstrate what I mean):
 1. Buying Sunshine Dairy, and using the \$250,000 towards starting a self-sustaining education program (partner with a university/college to lead this)
 2. Rent land or space similar to Remington Rand (I'm thinking hydroponics), to qualified individuals/companies. Have them work with St. Vincent DePaul, create jobs for some of the qualified people could be a training opportunity for them and an opportunity for a budding entrepreneur. Sell to our area restaurants.
 3. Partner with Kim O'Rouke, find a good source of recyclable/eco food cartons and purchase a year's worth for restaurants that want to participate with an agreement that they continue to use those

cartons/recycled products for another two years. (MIRA going in 2022). I am so sick of plastics, I could scream.

4. Partner with Wesleyan and create a Foundation - purchase a building to house conservation and like-wise education and events (donations and payments go to the Foundation). Rent for income.
- The use of wood chips on the floor of appropriate trails makes walking easier well as very clearly marking the trail. I think appropriate ones might be The Daniels/ Schwarzkopf or Wilcox.
 - Signs on each property that make clear where boundary lines between /Conservation Area and Private Property occur.
 - Omit the idea of a boardwalk over the vernal pools in the Red maple Swamp. When an assessment was done, it was recommended that no structures be built there in order that it remain totally undisturbed. Perhaps we could have a descriptive sign instead?