

# 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, June 21, 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

**Webinar Number/Access Code:** 2346 060 8876 **Webinar Password:** Middletown **Panelist Password:** openspace

In attendance: Commissioners Elisabeth Holder, Brian Gartner, Bob Daniels, Mike Thomas, Barbara Schukoske, Jim Miller  
Staff in Attendance: James Sipperly, Environmental Planner.

Public In attendance: Tyler Tulloch

### A. Call to Order

Chairperson B. Gartner called the meeting to order at 7:10pm

### B. Accept the Agenda

Motion: To accept the agenda as received. Moved by B. Schukoske, seconded by L. Holder, passed unanimously.

### C. Public Forum

None

### D. Approval of Minutes:

#### 1. Minutes of the May 17, 2022 Regular Meeting

Minutes were reviewed as received. Amendments are: Mike Thomas was not present, Mike Maier was; add "the meeting is being recorded after the call to order at 7:11pm"; under Trails Committee Brian Gartner mentioned the K. Coley sign, not Liz Holder.

Motion: To approve the minutes of May 17, 2022 as amended. Moved Bob Daniels, seconded by B. Schukoske; approved unanimously, with J. Miller and M. Thomas abstaining.

#### 2. Minutes of the May 23, 2022 Special Meeting.

Minutes were not available. Motion: To table the May 23, 2022. Moved by Bob Daniels, seconded by L. Holder; approved unanimously

### E. Request for Comment

None

### F. Officers and Committee Reports

#### 1. Chair's Report

Brian Gartner reported on the Middletown Youth Soccer (MYS) land deal. While he is not happy with the decisions being made, there is little to be done to change the outcome.

Discussion ensued to make sure this does not happen again on other open space properties in the future.

B. Gartner also discussed the closure of Lyceum Road. The South Fire Board supported the decision to keep it open. B. Gartner also stated that there is a process where you can close a road and Public works is going through this public process now. This has been a 30 year battle. Public Works did not hold a Public Hearing on this. B. Gartner stated that parts of Chamberlain Hill are worse.

Bob Daniels stated that he is glad the road will remain open. Lyceum Road is a major cross-over for agricultural users in the area, which there is a lot of. B. Daniels also mentioned that there are a lot of downed trees during storms where Livingston and Arbutus Roads are blocked. Millbrook has trees down all the time as well he added.

Liz Holder requested that when the time comes, a request should be made to install a larger culvert under the road because it floods often during large storm events. Liz pointed out that the 100 year flood events are happening more frequently now.

B. Daniels talked about the bad condition of the gravel road bed on Chamberlain Hill Road.

B. Gartner reported that the Common Council approved an appropriation to fund all the agricultural grants submitted. Staff will be working with city attorneys to finalize the contractual agreements.

B. Gartner mentioned that the Common Council voted not to rescind the motion to enter into the agreement with MYS. B. Gartner mentioned a state statute regarding if land to be sold is in a watershed it is required that an appraisal be performed. B. Gartner has had conversations with Brig smith on this and the statute is not too clear. B. Gartner has an issue with the process here and the process is not clear.

J. Sipperly stated that this whole issue was clouded many years ago by certain decisions made by certain people. This administration inherited this problem. J. Sipperly further stated that some commission members are worried about this happening again and further stated that he doesn't think this would happen again because of the unique set of circumstances that were created years ago. The way these parcels are purchased and managed now are different and much more managed than things done before. J. Miller stated that in 10 years from now when the MYS needs money that the city will probably end up buying it back for the full appraised value. The divestment of open space.

L. Holder stated that future open space purchases should have strong language and terms about future uses of those lands and that future leases of land to like Gabe Russo, be very clear and concise moving forward.

## **2. Trails Committee**

- i. ATV use on Lamentation Mountain/Land trust properties – David Brown  
Nothing to report
- ii. Trails Maintenance update and Katchen Coley sign upgrade.

L. Holder stated that there is nothing to report at this time. J. Sipperly stated that the Land Use Office has purchased a GPS unit to map trails in great detail. This can be used to map all the trails on our old properties and new properties recently acquired. B. Gartner asked if maintenance money can be used to fix the K. Coley sign and it was the consensus of members present that it can be. Brian stated that there should be some parking expanded as well and perhaps extend the trail further into the property. J. Sipperly mentioned that he knew the property well and it was purchased from Irwin Helfant. There is evidence of early American Indians on this site.

## **3. Agriculture Committee**

### **i. Ag Program/Grant**

B. Daniels thanked everyone involved especially M. Kozikowski and J. Sipperly for putting things together for the Common Council. J. Sipperly reported that M. Kozikowski is worked with Council members to do a direct appropriation. A letter should be generated as soon as possible to each recipient. An example of the contract was sent to Commission members and everyone is in agreement now including the city attorney's office. The Ag Committee would like to request a meeting with the bond council so that they know what monies can be spent on certain activities or not. B. Daniels will send an email requesting a meeting with them for clarification.

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

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

J. Konopka is not in attendance tonight and there is not much to report.

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

B. Gartner mentioned that in September there will be a Source to Sea Cleanup and he would like to sponsor a cleanup. J. Sipperly stated that he organized many cleanups for this event over the years for the Harbor Improvement Agency. J. Sipperly also mentioned that the former Milone and MacBroom Engineering Company has always did a cleanup in Middletown also. Perhaps there could be a collaboration this fall.

B. Gartner asked staff about the land fill trail and J. Sipperly responded that he has no knowledge of it at all. It was suggested that Brian contact Chris Holden or John Hall.

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

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

It was discussed whether Public Works crews could do some of the things that need to be done out there like removing trash and improving signage. M. Thomas is taking a woodland management course and stated that trained foresters are using new equipment and are doing much less damage to the forest implementing best management practices.

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

i. The Commission would like to get a status report on the Harvey property.

ii. J. Sipperly reported that his office is working with Jim Mahoney from Berlin on a tri-town Lamentation Mountain acquisition plan.

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

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

The CT RC&D staff has scheduled the site visit for the team on June 22, 2022 at 11:30am. J. Sipperly and M. Kozikowski will be there to greet the team members. B. Gartner will also try to attend.

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

##### **1. Trail Mapping Update**

As staff has mentioned earlier, a GPS device was purchased that will allow members and volunteers to map all the trails accurately. Members should think about what trails they know well and would want to walk for mapping.

##### **2. Return to the Riverbend – Riverfront Master Plan rollout- July, 2, 2022 at Harbor Park and Council Chambers.**

Everyone should have received an invitation to attend this event from the Land Use Office. Tours will be given as well.

#### **I. Member Forum**

B. Gartner mentioned that on the agenda moving forward we should include a partnership report. Staff will add it to subsequent agenda moving forward.

#### **J. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn at 8:45pm, Moved by B. Daniels and seconded by L. Holder passed unanimously.