

**TOWN OF CHESHIRE
ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2013
TOWN HALL ROOM 115 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Members present: Chairman Bill Sherman, Matt Abdifar, Carrie Collins, Robert DeVlyder, Jodee Heritage, and David Mercugliano.

Guests: Patrick Hedden, Barbara Hedden. Mr. Hedden will make a presentation under new business item number two.

Town Council Liaison: Sylvia Nichols (at 7:09 p.m.).

Member not present: All members present.

Staff Liaison: Suzanne Simone.

I. Call to Order

Mr. Sherman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Ms. Heritage called the roll.

**III. Determination of Quorum
Commissioner Attendance Summary**

Mr. Sherman determined there were enough members present for a quorum.

Members in attendance were Chairman Bill Sherman, Matt Abdifar, Carrie Collins, Robert DeVlyder, Jodee Heritage, and David Mercugliano.

Commissioner Attendance Summary

Mr. Sherman stated that all members stated they would attend tonight's meeting and they have.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the pledge of allegiance.

V. Acceptance of Minutes – Special Meeting – May 23, 2013

Mr. Sherman called for a motion to accept the minutes from the May 23, 2013 special meeting with corrections.

Motion: To accept the minutes of the May 23, 2013 special meeting with corrections: pg. 5 “gleam” to glean”; pg. 7 last paragraph “or” to “of”; pg. 11 “why” to “way.”

Moved by Ms. Heritage. Seconded by Mr. Abdifar. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

VI. Communications

1. National Public Lands Day:

Ms. Simone reviewed the communication regarding National Public Lands Day. She said it’s just a summary about that annual event – the town has participated in it in that past where we have had property maintenance.

Ms. Simone said there is also information on the website under upcoming events.

2. June 5, 2013 Courant.com article: Casertano property

Ms. Simone said the second communication is a copy of an article in the *Hartford Courant* regarding the Casertano property.

3. Patrick Hedden: Eagle Scout project, Casertano property

Ms. Simone said the third communication is an Eagle Scout project that’s proposed by Patrick Hedden who is here tonight.

4. The Habitat Newsletter

Ms. Simone said handed out to Commission members tonight is something that was just received today – it’s The Habitat which is the quarterly newsletter.

VII. Calendar – Events

1. National Public Lands Day: September 28, 2013 <http://www.publiclandsday.org/>

Mr. Sherman said the National Public Lands Day is coming up later this year.

This item would be covered in more detail under new business.

VIII. Unfinished Business

1. CT Trails Day Hike Recap

Mr. Sherman gave a recap of the CT Trails Day hike of the DeDominicis property.

Mr. Sherman reported for those who weren't there were 14 in attendance himself included along with Carrie Collins and Matt Abdifar.

Mr. Sherman gave a brief review of the trail hike – he informed the Commission that the group trekked through about two miles of the trail – it took about one hour.

Mr. Sherman said he reported to staff there were a few trees down.

Mr. Sherman said the folks that came - came from all around – he said he didn't ask specifically of those who came where they found out about the hike.

Ms. Collins reported that some people got the flyer at town hall even though they were from other towns or through the CT trails guide.

Ms. Collins said in her opinion the hike went very well. She thanked Mr. Sherman for leading the hike – she complemented him on doing a good job.

Mr. Sherman gave a brief overview of the hike – he noted he pointed out poison ivy for those who didn't know what it looked like.

Mr. Sherman said the hike was a nice experience and that he'd like to do it again this or another site.

Mr. Sherman stated for the record that Town Council liaison Sylvia Nichols joined the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

IX. New Business

1. Casertano Property Update

Ms. Simone reported that since the last time the Commission met staff was able to go out there and clear a bunch of the area where the trail sort of dead-ended where there was Autumn Olive. She said they were able to clear that area out.

Ms. Simone said the next step is they will be marking that one main trail – that will be done soon.

Ms. Simone reported that the post was installed yesterday and the markers were installed today; she said it seem as though there is a decent amount of use already since they made a parking area. She said maybe they can talk about doing a public hike to get people out onto the property and do a press release.

2. Patrick Hedden Presentation: Eagle Scout Project at Casertano

Mr. Sherman introduced Patrick Hedden to the Commission.

Mr. Sherman stated that Mr. Hedden's family lives adjacent to the Casertano property so he's had kind of a lifelong attraction to the property.

Mr. Hedden addressed the Commission. He explained that he has a proposal to clean up the whole trail that's there currently – to clear the brush and then to put in a new trail that is mapped on a map – blaze that trail and to build a trail head kiosk.

Mr. Hedden reviewed the Commission to map showing the existing and proposed trails and the location of the parking lot.

Mr. Hedden showed on the map the location of the walking points along the trail. He reviewed areas shown on the map indicating locations of what he calls mountains and flatter areas on the trail.

Mr. Hedden said when there are no leaves on the trees you can see Meriden Mountain.

Mr. Hedden said the plan is cut out a lot of Japanese Barberry and clear out some downed trees and clearing brush to a certain width so that you can walk on it with an area of clearing on either so brush won't be growing back into the trail. He said water bars would be placed in areas that are steep – he said the trail sort of goes along some old logging farm roads.

Mr. Hedden said the material for the water bars will be trees that they find downed and rocks. He explained a few years ago bar waters put in along an area of the trail.

Mr. Hedden said the project should take about a month but possibly longer – maybe a few months.

Mr. Hedden said he hoped he'd get soon and start this year.

Mr. Hedden noted on the map a few areas of concern – areas that get really overgrown and where there's a gulley.

Mr. Mercugliano asked if the project would include some kind of clearing of the existing trail as well a newly proposed trail.

Mr. Hedden said yes. He said he proposed to place the kiosk off of Marion Road where the parking is – he noted the parking lot is very nice.

Mr. Sherman said he liked the way the project has been proposed – he said the newly proposed trail is flat so you are giving more chances for people to enjoy the property rather than just climbing the trail. He said he wondered if some of the maintenance of the existing trail is lined up to be more than Mr. Hedden can handle – they can think about a cleanup as part of the National Public Lands Day (he said they can revisit this as the next few months go on).

Mr. Hedden said he had help lined up for this project – he had his Boy Scout leader and troop and students from his school to help with the project.

Mr. Sherman asked about use of power equipment and would that be in Mr. Hedden's father's jurisdiction.

Ms. Simone said they are working on the use of power equipment – the town manager needs to weigh in on this item since the project help is from volunteers.

Mr. Sherman said he just wanted to make sure Mr. Hedden was aware of restrictions, liabilities and things like that.

Mr. Hedden said he wasn't sure of the project costs but the kiosk could cost about \$200 and volunteers would help clear the trail.

Mr. Hedden stated that this project has been cleared with his Eagle Scout leader.

Mr. Sherman explained that Mr. Hedden's next step would be to get the Commission's blessing then to the next town level.

Ms. Simone said she's having discussion with the town manager to finalize details – she said they were not sure this was something that would have to go to the Town Council or if this is something that gets administrative approval so they are working on that –going before this Commission is one step in that direction.

Ms. Heritage stated that she thought this was a great project.

Motion: That the Commission gives Mr. Hedden a vote of confidence for the Casertano property trail project pending the other town approvals.

Moved by Ms. Heritage. Seconded by Mr. Mercugliano.

Mr. Mercugliano stated that he knows Mr. Hedden well and his troop and has great confidence in his ability to accomplish this and how he plans to do as well has the ability to harness the resources to get the project done.

Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

Mr. Hedden gave Ms. Simone the map he referenced during his presentation.

Ms. Simone agreed to make a copy of the map and return the original to Mr. Hedden - she said she'd be in touch with him very soon.

3. Halperin Management Plan Draft

The Commission reviewed the Halperin Management Plan draft.

Mr. Sherman said the Halperin property is the area near where he lives – the property is comprised of 8+ acres; he said there's not a whole lot going on there other than it's a forested property that's on a hillside.

Ms. Simone said this property is located basically behind the gas station located on RT 68 in between Mountain Road and Prospect Road.

Ms. Simone said the property has a lot of steep topography – it's somewhat of an isolated site because there is not connectivity currently to other open properties – there is a larger parcel about 16 acres immediately to the south and that is owned in private open space with

one residence on it so there may be potential at some point for either the town or another land use or land conservation agency to obtain that.

Ms. Simone explained currently the property can be used for passive recreation – the 8.24 acres but it does have limitation because it's not connected – there is direct access from either Mountain Road or Prospect Road – there's no parking currently available.

Ms. Simone said looking at this site because it is somewhat isolated – they are not actively working on plans for any parking area.

Ms. Simone explained there is a known endangered species on this property – the state does keep records – there are numerous endangered species all along the Prospect Ridge.

Ms. Simone stated that the management plan basically allows for public access; there is one trail on this property – it goes in a south to north direction; the landscape does allow for walking up onto the higher portions – the site is pretty heavily wooded.

Ms. Simone said the focus of the permitted uses – it's mostly for natural habitat conservation as well as allowing for walking and passive recreation but the draft does not include allowance for horseback riding because the property is small, somewhat isolated and there inability to connect to other property in the future but that's something that may be revisited.

Mr. Sherman said that trail was the former trolley.

Ms. Simone stated yes – it does have historic significance.

Mr. Sherman said the next step after us would be the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Motion: That the Commission accepts the Halperin Property Management Plan as written.

Moved by Ms. Heritage. Seconded by Mr. Abdifar. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

4. National Public Lands Day; Cheshire event

Mr. Sherman said the next item to discuss was the National Public Lands Day.

Ms. Simone gave the Commission a brief review of past events dating back to 2006 – she said first event was the trail marking at DeDominicis property; there was a public hike another year and then the Casertano property and Ten Mile Lowlands events were a couple of years ago.

Ms. Simone said there is a website where you can register your event that is searchable and information is put out about event much the same way as the CT Forest and Park Association.

Ms. Simone said there is a cutoff date for submitting event for the website. She said she would investigate and find out what the cutoff date is and report that date back to the Commission.

Mr. Sherman noted that he knew of another Boy Scout who wanted to do a cleanup of the Ten Mile Lowlands and build a kiosk with the materials the Commission already had in storage – he said maybe the Commission can hold this project open until they hear back from the Boy Scout.

Mr. Sherman said maybe they can promote help for Mr. Hedden's project or cleanup of the Ten Mile Lowlands.

Mr. Sherman asked if any other Commission member had any suggestions for an event.

Ms. Simone stated there were always opportunities for work at all the town owned open space properties.

Mr. Abdifar said he liked the idea of a cleanup – he said they can make it as small or as big as they want; he said he didn't think a lot of people in town knew about open space areas and that the town has land that they can go hike on; he said maybe they could have an informational thing at the library.

Ms. Collins suggested a cleanup effort focused around removal of poison ivy – she said it would be a way to promote the use of open space.

Ms. Simone said they did have issues with poison ivy growing on a kiosk – the issue is it just grows back.

Mr. Mercugliano commented about publicizing and promoting open space properties – especially the proposed Casertano project because it's a Boy Scout project and could interest other scouts to do future for projects.

Ms. Heritage talked about informing the high school that projects were available to fulfill community service requirements.

Mr. Sherman said since the Commission has a couple of parcels that activity going on for the next couple of months – they could keep their fingers on the progress and they may be able to say by the time August rolls around that Mr. Hedden needs help so they don't have to commit to which property needs help. He said this (getting high school students involved) would be a good way to get the community out there and publicized at least one of the properties.

The Commission would follow up on this item.

5. Social Media

Ms. Collins said she did a little research - she reached out to another committee that has a Facebook page and a website which is the Cheshire Human Services Committee.

Ms. Collins said the Cheshire Human Services site is not political in nature – the site is just providing updates to the town and highlighting events and also they have members activity monitoring the site and making sure the site remains non-political and to keep the site positive in nature.

Ms. Collins said she proposed running the idea (starting a website or creating a Facebook page or Twitter account) as a form of communication by Ms. Nichols and checking with the Town Council to make sure there are no other policies around social media – again making sure it's not political and it's just highlighting updates of what the Commission is doing and highlighting upcoming events.

Ms. Nichols said the Commission is able to use the town's website to post events and information.

Ms. Collins said she wanted to make sure there were no conflicting issues.

Ms. Nichols said she couldn't speak about creating a social media site but that she'd do some research and get back to Ms. Collins.

6. July and August Meeting Attendance

Mr. Sherman queried members about their attendance in July and August for attending meetings – enough members would be present for at least a July meeting.

Mr. Sherman stated the next commission meetings would be held on July 10 and August 14, 2013.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Sherman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 p.m.

Moved by Ms. Collins. Seconded by Abdifar. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

Respectfully submitted:

**Carla Mills
Recording Secretary
Cheshire Environment Commission**