

**CHESHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2013
TOWN HALL 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET ROOM 115 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Members present: Chairman Bill Sherman, Matt Abdifar, Carrie Collins and Bob DeVylde.

Member not present: Jodee Heritage, David Mercugliano and Daniel Grasso.

Staff: Suzanne Simone.

Guests: Tim White, who asked to place an item of new business on the agenda (through one of the Commission members). Jeff Gebeau from the Record Journal was also present.

Ms. Collins served as secretary pro-tem in Ms. Heritage's absence.

I. Call to Order

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

II. Roll Call

Ms. Collins called the roll.

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

Mr. Sherman stated there was four members present which constitutes a quorum.

Bill Sherman, Matt Abdifar, Carrie Collins and Bob DeVylde were present.

Jodee Heritage, David Mercugliano and Daniel Grasso indicated they would not present.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the pledge of allegiance.

V. Acceptance of Minutes - Regular Meeting on July 10, 2013

Mr. Sherman called for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2013 regular meeting.

Motion: To accept the minutes from the July 10, 2013 meeting with corrections.

Pg. 4 should read “Mr. Voelker explained that this property “is” like many of the properties along the Prospect Ridge “that” have been...” Under new business: the discussion about social media: “Ms. Collins suggested the possibility of the Environment Commission piloting a social media site that could be shared that knowledge with other commissions/boards. Ms. Nichols had agreed to follow-up on this item.”

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

VI. Communications

There were no communications this month.

VII. Calendar – Events

- 1. Fall Festival: Saturday September 7, 2013
(rain date: Sunday September 8)**

Mr. Sherman said the fall festival would be coming up very soon. – September 7. This item would be discussed under unfinished business.

- 2. National Public Lands Day: September 28, 2013
(no rain date); <http://www.publiclandsday.org/>**

Mr. Sherman said this item would be addressed under unfinished business.

VIII. Unfinished Business

- 1. National Public Lands Day: Cheshire Event**

Mr. Sherman explained this item was talked about a bit at the last meeting.

Mr. Abdifar informed the Commission that he did call the high school a bunch of times (five times) and he never heard back so he bypassed that (process) a little bit and contacted the Environment Club and the Young Democrats Club both want to do it (help with the event) and their advisors are okay with it so it will give them hours as part of the club to help volunteer.

Mr. Abdifar said they should get about twenty kids for that day. He said the Environment Club is pretty small so there are like five kids from that and fifteen from the Young Democrats.

Mr. Sherman stated that was excellent recruiting.

Mr. Abdifar said he since it was summer time he did understand the high school not getting back to. He said when it opens up there will be more people to help (volunteers) but at the very least we have twenty.

Ms. Simone said a suggesting when looking at the public properties and seeing what needs to be done – she said she thought a property that could accommodate different crowds to break them off into different groups would be the DeDominicis property. She explained there was a significant amount of stream bank clean up that needs to take place and the clean-up is removing a lot of debris that's gotten into the watercourse and is blocking a culvert area – it's easy access to get to it right off the trail and wouldn't require heavy equipment – it's just basically picking up debris and moving it off of the stream bank.

Ms. Simone said in addition there's a pretty sizable area of Barberry which is an invasive species that can be dug up and removed from the site.

Mr. Sherman asked if the scope of work would require hand tools or power tools.

Ms. Simone said she believed for the stream bank it would just be removing by hand maybe with some pitch forks something like that and for the shrub removal shovels and maybe some clippers.

Mr. Sherman said it sounds like a great way to enlist people's help here.

Mr. Abdifar said he'll call the high school again tomorrow and then next week – he said it's the vice principal that sets the volunteer hours.

Ms. Simone asked if she should create a flyer for the fall festival to hand out.

Mr. Sherman said that would be a good idea – he said at least now they have a group of potential recruits willing and able to help. He said it's in the being of the school year when they'll get more response.

Ms. Collins asked if they were to get more (volunteers) would there be other areas that could support clean-up.

Ms. Simone said also on the DeDominicis property there's an area that can be cleaned up more towards the boarder of the property so she believed that's ample work and even people could even remark some of the trails especially the orange trail that seems to fade a bit.

Mr. Abdifar asked what kind of timing he should set.

It was suggested volunteers could work three hours from 9:00 to 12:00 noon.

Mr. Sherman said so in the intervening staff will develop a work plan for these teams and set up tasks that are required.

Ms. Simone said she would work on this and also work on the flyer.

Mr. White said if he found any groups that were interested – he said he'd be taking with the scout in the next couple of weeks – he would mention the event to them and disburse the information out if there interested. He said if he got a chance to do that and their receptive he'd give a call.

Ms. Simone said to supply people with her contact information.

2. Fall Festival

Mr. Sherman said the Commission may recall they talked about this at a previous meeting and they do have a booth set aside for that which will be staff throughout the day.

Mr. Sherman said he would inquire from other Commission member's availability on that day to take a shift; an hour or two hours.

Ms. Simone said the festival hours are 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and you could get there an hour early to set up.

Ms. Simone stated the tent is scheduled to be shared with the Energy Commission.

Ms. Simone shared details regarding the location of the tent. She said once she received verification of the tent location she'd forward that on to Commission members and also one pass is provided for parking for whoever is going to get there first to allow access into the park with a vehicle to unload.

Mr. Sherman said he was happy to set up and take the first shift and then come back at the end and take things away.

Mr. Sherman said he'd be pleased if other Commission would volunteer for an hour or two.

Mr. Abdifar volunteered to do two hours.

Ms. Collins said she'd be happy to do two hours 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

There was no response from Mr. DeVlyder regarding his availability to volunteer.

Mr. DeVlyder asked about the handouts the Commission had.

Ms. Simone shared with the Commission the materials that would be handed out at the festival. She showed members the old maps and copies of the new maps she's been working on.

The Commission reviewed the maps of the open space properties.

Ms. Simone talked about the maps – she said not all of the maps they have that are generated by the Regional Planning Agency show trails on them such as the Casertano property or Ten Mile Lowlands; she said she'd still provide the map and then provide some additional information on how to access or to let people know a kiosk is coming to the Ten Mile Lowlands or how to access the trail in general.

Ms. Simone talked about the maps and the number of maps of the various sites that would be available.

Ms. Simone commented about the paper the maps were printed on – she said it's a glossy paper so if the Commission would like to authorize spending of funds to buy paper to they could get at least 100 copies of each of the properties. She said she'd look into seeing if the paper was recyclable. The paper comes in a ream of three hundred sheets and it is \$15.

Mr. Sherman noted the use of the Cheshire Open Space logo on the front of the maps.

Ms. Simone said there is \$300 in the Commission's budget for program supplies and \$100 for advertising.

Mr. Abdifar asked if there was a way to make sure he maps are printed on environmentally recycled paper.

Ms. Simone said she'd look into that.

Motion: That the Commission authorizes the purchase of three reams of paper (preferably recycled paper) for new color maps.

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

Ms. Simone said other handouts would include the window decals – two varieties; last year Whole Foods donated tote bags and there were other display materials including the Environment Commission banner and the logo foam board and some older mapping that can be displayed, the outdated open space map – she showed an example of what the newer map looked like.

Ms. Simone showed a copy of a map that the town's conservation and development were working – the map shows the quality of printing. She said the mapping is done from the Regional Planning Agency and what they have provided us showed what they have provided as of 2011 is an open space map.

The Commission reviewed the map.

Ms. Simone said she could the Regional Planning Agency to see if they could provide the Commission with another map.

Ms. Simone said calling around to local vendors they could get a large map for \$45. She said she didn't know if that could happen in time for the fall festival but in the meantime they have some maps that are still accurate – and the mapping is complete except when you get to the DeDominicis property mapping.

Ms. Simone talked about the details on the mapping and what properties where shown and which properties were not shown.

Ms. Simone said in addition the town is getting new GIS system so eventually very soon they will be able to create these maps in-house.

Mr. Sherman commented about getting the new map if not in time for the festival but for future uses.

Mr. Abdifar said he's suggested this idea at other organization meetings – do they want to do something fun like have a basket of candy and see if people can guess how many acres (total acreage) of open space Cheshire has or something like that. He talked about having a prize for the winner if they guessed correctly.

The Commission discussion Mr. Abdifar's idea and how to incorporate it at the festival.

Motion: That the Commission authorizes the purchase of a new full open map at the cost of \$45 (approximate cost).

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

Mr. Sherman again logistics for the fall festival – he'd set up the materials and will double check the time and will keep all the Commission members up to date by email or phone call as the date nears.

3. Social Media

There was no new information to report.

Ms. Collins said she is still waiting to hear back from Sylvia Nichols on whether the Environment Commission could do a pilot on social media and use their findings to help draft some policy on how other Commission could use it – this item is still pending.

Ms. Collins said the Commission was also still waiting to hear back from Ms. Nichols about the town site that they would potentially be able to use if they were not able to have their own pilot site.

4. Ketchum Management Plan Draft

Ms. Simone reviewed the Ketchum Management Plan.

Ms. Simone reviewed the property location – on the Prospect Ridge and is in close proximity to the Ben's property which is also on the agenda tonight.

Ms. Simone reviewed the property management plan details.

Ms. Simone said it's a small lot 1.85 acres – it is wooded; it does have one trail that bisects that leads to neighboring property which is privately held open space which then eventually does through the Ben's property then the Chelsea property then eventually to Roaring Brook.

Ms. Simone said the management plan is standard recognizing that it's open for public access – for passive recreation and habitat conservation and talks about maintaining the biodiversity of the property.

Ms. Simone stated there is an endangered species on that lot as is all along the ridge there are identified endangered species.

Commission members reviewed updated versions of the Ketchum management plan.

Mr. Sherman asked if there were any questions about the plan. He said after our group the plan goes on to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Motion: That the Commission accepts the Ketchum Management Plan draft with the revisions made by staff.

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

5. Ben's Homestead Management Plan Draft

Ms. Sherman said again after the plan passes through this Commission it will go on to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Ms. Simone gave a review of the Ben's Homestead Management plan draft. She stated that this property is also along the ridge (Prospect Ridge).

Ms. Simone reviewed the plan's property description with Commission members. She said the description identifies that this is at the end of Cornwall Avenue Extension.

Ms. Simone explained as of right now there is no easement to allow public access directly off of that extension onto this property but this property was accessible from Prospect – Regional Water Authority owes property on top and used to allow public access on to the property to allow for hiking but she didn't know what their policies are now; she said she knew they (RWA) clamped down as far as public access and parking on their properties.

Ms. Simone said with the purchase of the Chelsea property there will be a trail system to access this area (Ben's property).

Ms. Simone said she suggested a correction in the fourth paragraph under section one where it reads "Ben's Homestead is located on the Quinnipiac Blue Trail" – she recommended the wording be reversed to say the "Quinnipiac Blue Trail is located on the Ben's Homestead."

Ms. Simone said this property has been identified from the Environment Commission in the 1980s as an area of desired conservation. There are 56 acres on this property – it has the Blue Trail that runs along the top of the ridge which borders Prospect and Cheshire.

Ms. Simone stated there is an endangered species on this property or at least one and the allowed management goals follow the same as the Ketchum property which is to allow public access – public enjoyment – passive recreation – and habitat conservation to allow for the diversities to support the diversity on that property.

Ms. Simone stated the plan does identify there's not a direct street access or parking faculty on this property at this time.

Ms. Simone stated the CT Blue Trail is maintained by the CT Forest and Park Association and they are a pretty active group – they have maintained that trail for a number of years so they have volunteers that go through that area and clean that trail up.

Mr. White asked about the road on the property – he asked if the town attorneys when through all the land records.

Ms. Simone said there's private property at the end of the road.

There was discussion about the road going up to Prospect being private property and not town property. Ms. Simone noted a portion of the property is private property and at some point the town may be able to purchase the property for public access to the property.

Motion: That the Commission accepts the Ben's Homestead Management Plan draft as presented and corrected.

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

6. Scout Projects

Mr. Sherman asked if Ms. Simone had heard any more from scout interested in the Casertano project.

Ms. Simone stated yes she did hear from him recently and he said that he is starting work on the project – he said he was a little disappointed he wasn't getting as much done as he thought he was going to get done this summer but that he is still actively working on it.

Ms. Simone said she did ask him if he wanted assistance in getting volunteers for National Public Lands Day – if some volunteers could help him at that site and he (Patrick Hedden) said he had indicated he had enough volunteers with his scout troop so he declined that; he is continuing to verify the mapping out of the new trail before he starts clearing that area.

Mr. Sherman said they did have another scout who was planning to do the kiosk at the Ten Mile Lowlands – he spoke with him about a week or so ago and encouraged him to contact staff directly. Mr. Sherman said the scout had been tied up on a three week summer scout trip.

Mr. Sherman said he'd continued to reach out to him so they should see some action on that this fall. He explained the scout still needed to write up his plan and get that passed through the scout supervisors to get approval and he (Mr. Sherman) has believed he's done that – his next step was to come to the town (to staff) and get her approval and take that back to the scouts and having the approvals to proceed.

Mr. Sherman stated the Commission has the materials for this kiosk (and drawing).

IX. New Business

1. Discussion of Legislation Impacts to Cheshire

There was no report.

2. CT Clean Energy Finance & Investment Authority (CEFIA)

Mr. Sherman said this item is in regarding the CT Clean Energy and Finance and Investment Authority.

Mr. Sherman said Tim White has asked to update the Commission on what that is.

Tim White explained the Energy Commission voted to pass for Cheshire to participate in a local solar program that is organized at the state level by the state agencies.

Mr. White said the Energy Commission voted on it and the Town Council then voted on it in support of it participating in the solar program and Cheshire was selected to participate.

Mr. White said when he says solar he means both solar electric and solar hot water.

Mr. White said he was here tonight really in two roles – he said he is listed as the lead volunteer for this program; role one – basic outreach which he plans on doing with dozens and dozens of groups over the next couple of months as this campaign unfolds over 20 weeks from about September to February –somewhere in that time frame.

Mr. White said he was here for two different reasons one is just to increase awareness of the program as it gets rolled and the Town of Cheshire has the opportunity to participate and also if the Environment Commission is interest in supporting it with an actual vote or in spirit.

Mr. White stated at the fall festival they'll probably have a soft announcement or soft opening – giving people a website where people can go and put there address and blast it out a couple of weeks later with the hard opening.

Mr. White explained the program is basically targeted toward supporting Commissioner Esty's general goal of energy here in the State of Connecticut which is cleaner, cheaper and more reliable energy.

Mr. White said the solar program is a good opportunity in CT for people. He said if end up buying solar you are probably going to have payback or return on your investment in under ten years for your home. He said it's still a little bit expensive but one of the things that happening there are cash purchase options or finance options as well as leasing it (which people in town do). He said from some people's perspective it's not even about cheaper electric....

Tape change:

Mr. White said you get paid back after ten years and then can get electricity free for the next ten or fifteen years as long as the solar panels work.

Mr. White talked about budget considerations –and that people could keep their budgets fixed. He talked about shopping for electricity; he said locking in using solar panels the rates could be locked in for the next twenty years (by leasing the panels) – they know what they're going to pay.

Mr. White talked about the financing the use of solar panels. He said in his opinion he thought it was a great idea.

Mr. White he just wanted to make people aware – he said the program would probably be starting sometime in September so there will be more information in the near future – hopefully something at the fall festival to share. He said from what he knows it's generally been good for people with the solar.

Mr. White talked about the pricing options; he said the cost is about \$20,000 outright to the homeowner – there will be an \$8000 to \$10,000 credit from the state and if you pay federal taxes you'll get 30% income tax credit on that. He went on to talk about the pricing – tax credit details.

Mr. Sherman thanked **Mr. White** for his presentation. He said maybe the Energy Commission will have something about this at their booth at the fall festival.

Mr. White also stated the town has three people – two people on the Energy Commission as well as one person on the Public Building Commission will go through a selection process with the state agency which has a lot of experience with solar installers.

Mr. White talked about the process and oversight of selecting installer – there will be oversight of selecting installers for quality control purposes and make sure things are working well. He said the town people (the three people) will interview installers and will make a decision as to what will work well for the town. He said there will be a few equipment decisions that will have to be made based on what is right for Cheshire (with guidance from the State Clean Energy Agency).

Mr. White talked about the different kinds of installers out there and the different ways to approach this so that's what the town people will be filtering – all those different aspects of installers.

Mr. White said the installers will bid for the lowest price as part of the overall selection process. He talked about the program and said what's been found there is about a \$5000 savings per installation by going through this process (not including the state and federal tax credits).

Mr. White said in his opinion there's value and it's useful to go through this program.

Mr. Sherman asked if one they go through this process will there be a vetted vendor list that the town would be suggesting.

Mr. White said there are about sixty solar electric installers in the state; he said choosing from sixty is too many he thought two or three that

people can choose from they will be probably more likely to go down that path (saying he town gave a general seal of approval).

Ms. Collins stated but they don't have to go with the list of installer from the town – it's only a suggestion.

Mr. White said you can choose any of the sixty installers that you want; the idea is trying the installer a little bit of scale – if they do ten installations in town versus one in ten different towns – they have the commute time, building inspectors – everything just takes a lot more time (and costs more).

Mr. White said he also had a comment about a legislation impacts to Cheshire – he said he was aware of legislation passed – it's called the compressive energy strategy and one of the things included in this is legislation that changes the way towns get their electricity – he said one of the things that might be possible.

Mr. White said he's still looking into it (and he's still reading the legislation) is the possibility of the town doing its own electric generation – not necessarily the owner of the facility but you can get someone else to come in and do the facility and the town could just buy the electric from them.

Mr. White said in regards to the environment wind won't work in town – solar is a possibility and so what he is trying to figure out is the possibility of using the five or six acres at the dump that's just wide open and put a solar farm in there – and the way the electricity laws have changed they might be actually able to put a solar farm there and then generate for example – electricity for the high school at a much discounted rate with a payback under twenty years.

Mr. White said he just mentions this because solar and electric is related to the environment.

Mr. White said this was legislation passed and signed by Governor Malloy in July 2013.

Mr. Sherman thanked Mr., White for the presentation.

Mr. Sherman said this project would probably be under the osmoses' of the Energy Commission but he thought it was nice to be aware of things like this.

Mr. DeVlyder said it was interesting to listen to it but as far as this Commission goes it has nothing to do with us.

Mr. Sherman said it was just more of an awareness – to share the information.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Sherman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted:

**Carla Mills
Recording Secretary
Cheshire Environment Commission**