

**CHESHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2013
TOWN HALL ROOM 115 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Members present: Bill Sherman, Robert DeVylder, Matt Abdihar, David Mercugliano, Carrie Collins and Jodee Heritage.

Member Absent: Daniel Grasso.

Staff Present: Suzanne Simone.

Guest: Town council member Sylvia Nichols

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.

Daniel Grasso was not present.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the pledge of allegiance.

V. Acceptance of Minutes : Regular Meeting – August 14, 2013

Mr. Sherman called for a motion to accept the minutes from the August 14, 2013 meeting.

Motion: To accept the minutes of the August 14, 2103 regular meeting.

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

VI. Communications

1. CACIWC, The Habitat, Summer 2013 Newsletter

Ms. Simone handed out copies of The Habitat, Summer 2013 newsletter.

VII. Calendar – Events

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

Mr. Sherman noted the National Public Lands Day is at the end of this month.

Discussion of this item would be covered under unfinished business.

VIII. Unfinished Business

1. Fall Festival Recap

Mr. Sherman said he wanted to thank fellow Commission members Bob, Matt and Carrie who were able to man the booth.

Mr. Sherman said the booth was pretty much busy all day right from the get go. He said it was busy from about 10:00 a.m. to around 3:00 p.m. or so when it tapered off but there were people coming up to the booth right up until 5:00 p.m. as he started to break down the booth.

Mr. Sherman said they handed out a lot of flyers and engaged in a fair amount of conversation with a lot of different folks.

Mr. Sherman said he mentioned to Ms. Simone that it was a good day – there was a lot of traffic – they had a good location as well.

Ms. Collins said she thought it was well attend.

Mr. Abdihar said the giveaway was a good idea – he said he got a lot of questions and gave prizes.

Mr. DeVlyder said he thought it was really busy....he said people were looking for other trails to go on.

Mr. Abdihar said he thought it was good to partner with the Energy Commission.

The Commission discussed the maps of the open space properties that were given out.

Ms. Collins said there were some questions about the DeDominicis property – she said people seemed to know about the other properties.

Mr. DeVlyder said there were questions about the Dime Savings property. He said a lot of people brought it up and asked how you get to it. He asked if there were maps for this property.

Ms. Simone stated there was a new map/flyer for that property (Dime Savings).

Ms. Simone informed the Commission that she prepared ten new property maps. The ten properties are: Boulder Knoll, Casertano, Cheshire Park, DeDominicis, Dime Savings, Farmington Canal Linear Trail, Mixville Hills, Roaring Brook, Quinnipiac Park River Walk, and Ten Mile Lowlands.

Ms. Simone said there is a map for this property and it explains right in the description that its land locked so there's not an ability currently to get there. She explained there used to be a way through the Regional Water Authority property but they can no longer do that; since 9/11 public access has been restricted to Regional Water Authority properties.

Mr. DeVlyder asked about access from behind the supermarket.

Ms. Simone stated that's private property.

Ms. Simone said so there's currently no agreement for that private property access. She said access was granted for one day to access the town property for a clean-up.

2. National Public Lands Day: September 28, 2013; Cheshire event

Mr. Sherman said this event has been promoted to be the DeDominicis property for the clean-up.

Mr. Sherman explained at the fall festival some people took the flyer to sign up and he was curious as to whether staff had gotten anything by the way of the internet.

Ms. Simone said she had not received any calls but they are going to be posting it on the website tomorrow and there will be a press release this week.

Mr. Abdihar said he spoke to Assistant Principal Reed at the High School about getting students involved besides the Environment Club and she (Reed) emailed the teacher that's ahead of the Community Service Club so she knows to call him if she has any students who want to be involved.

The date for the National Public Lands Day event is September 28, 2013.

Mr. Sherman said the scope of this project as recommended by staff if for the removal of certain shrubs primarily invasive (Barberry) and clearing out some debris that's blocking the culverts.

Mr. Sherman asked Ms. Simone informed the Commission how they can tackle this.

Ms. Simone said she's in the process of contacting the Parks Department and Public Works to get the tools lined up and to get a staff person in place to be able to move the tools to the site.

Ms. Simone said she's started an inventory of tools that she thinks they'll need. She said she's trying to encourage the volunteers that are coming to bring their own heavy gloves - Barberry does have thorns so their trying to get that word out to people to ready for work and they should have work boots and be ready that way.

Ms. Simone said so she's trying to coordinate with different departments who are dropping the materials off as well as those helping with the final clean-up at the end - the invasive shrub species will have to be removed from the site - they will have seeds on them at this time so they'll have to get them off the site.

Ms. Simone explained she will be going out to the site either this week or next week to do an inventory and to start marking the shrubs - she said she's not going to mark every single one but just so there's a good swath of an area where volunteers can start and then they'll be familiar with what it looks like when they're finished the work.

Ms. Simone said for the stream channel clean up - that would involved just getting right in the stream channel and moving a lot of wood debris that has accumulated behind the culverts and has blocked three of the five culverts that are crossing that tributary.

Ms. Simone said it should not be very extensive work but from what she's seen most of the pieces are smaller pieces that have just sort of accumulated against larger branches – those branches might have to stay or they might have to get staff to go out there at a later date to move those heavier pieces but she thinks they can make a big dent with volunteers in getting that cleared so the people that will be in the stream channel may want to wear water proof boots or something like that.

Ms. Simone said those are the two projects based the groups they've lined up that she thought would be reasonable projects – as they start to get more interest there will be the ability to do other things on the site; they can mark orange and yellow trails – those colors are visibly faded against the tree bark as well as doing a clean up at the Corliss Road access.

Mr. Sherman asked about in the trail is the barberry.

Ms. Simone said its on the blue trail – the blue trail is a little trail right off of the red trail so its not that far – town vehicles are able to get in there; they had a Bronco that they were able to drive on to that property previously when they were doing a more substantial project on that site and so it is accessible – she said she has the older map – she showed the area on the map – its not that far from the entrance; the Barberry area and the culvert crossing is not that far away from the blue trail.

Mr. Mercugliano asked for a point of clarification – at what time and specific location were volunteers gathering at.

Ms. Simone replied 9:00 a.m. at Old Lane Road. She said there's on street parking on Old Lane Road and there's a kiosk there so people can identify the entrance to the property.

Mr. Sherman said he'd be happy to set up something that makes it look like a main gathering point with a table and what have you to get started. He said he said he could be there for half the time so he'd hope that some other Commission members can volunteer again if not the whole time – half the time because they do have volunteers that need to get direction.

Mr. Abdihar said he'd be there for the duration of the event.

Mr. Sherman said if people need to check their calendars that's fine but if they can reach out to one another the next couple of days to they know who's able to attend.

Mr. Sherman said the event runs until 12:00 noon – again it's going to be a function of who comes and how ambitious we all are or not.

Mr. Abdihar said he'll try to get a count ahead of time from the teacher.

Ms. Simone said if they have enough volunteers they may be able to end at 11:00 a.m.

Mr. Mercugliano said he'd reach out to Troop 51 so they'll be likely to get a half-dozen solid volunteers.

Mr. Sherman commented briefly on how to organize the volunteers once the day comes along.

Mr. Sherman said kind of tied into or related to volunteering and the clean up – he said he'd like to have Jodee mention something she came across today.

Ms. Heritage said it's a different date – she said her youngest child plays lacrosse for Cornell so she can't help on the 28th but at the Academy on Saturday, October 19 is their community service day and when she emailed the person who is in charge she said how great if they needed people to help clean up sites.

Ms. Heritage said her email says “we can get the kids to the site – we can then get faculty to organize them and to work too – as many kids as you can use – we can provide 5 to 200.” She said having said that maybe what you want to do it see how the 28th goes and then she and Ms. Simone can talk to see how many kids you need to help.

Ms. Heritage said she could be around on October 19 too to help with the site so maybe they do two sites – but if they want to think in those terms they have bodies willing and able and it's mandatory; and there's transportation provided and adults present so this might be another opportunity.

Mr. Sherman said staff reminded him that they have a budget to get some snacks and water and that sort of thing to have available.

Ms. Simone suggested that Commission members get the items and then they'd get reimbursed for the expense. She said there's \$300 in the budget for program supplies.

Motion: To tap into the program supply account to pay for necessarily supplies for National Public Lands Day volunteers.

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

3. Social Media

Ms. Simone said just a little back ground that ties into social media – the town was awarded \$144,000 grant to update the audio visual for meetings up at town council room as well as a camera the town for video to put up on the website so there's an undertaking to upgrade the hardware, the software as well as the technical support.

Ms. Simone said the town has had other commission that did social media – there were some glitches that came about and now with the interest from the Environment Commission to explore social media there is a social media committee and they want to hear from Commission members on what the interest is and how to develop this policy so that all the 19 boards and commissions then will have guidelines on how to set up there social media page; this is something the town is acting on very soon and the have asked if someone could be appointed from the Environment Commission to be able to speak about social media.

Ms. Collins agreed to volunteer. She said she has experience with other organizations.

Ms. Nichols asked if Ms. Collins got a communication from the town manager this week.

Ms. Collins said she did not.

Ms. Nichols said the town manager was supposed to send her something today but didn't get it yet. She commented that there's a need from the town's perspective to have some general guidelines so that there's control but their not trying to control everything you put out there; there just needs to be some policy to prevent misuse and that its being done under the guides of the Town of Cheshire.

Ms. Nichols said anyone of you can post anything they wanted on any Facebook page about any event but if it's officially a town communication that's what their concerned about.

Ms. Collins stated she has experience in this area.

Ms. Nichols said and that's exactly what they want to.....

There was discussion about the need for some guidelines and items that were posted on sites that lead to questions to town staff that they couldn't answer because it wasn't posted by a commission and staff was not aware of what the commission had done.

4. Scout Projects

Ms. Simone reported that Boy Scout Patrick Hedden had indicated that he started to do some work on the trail and that he has some Boy Scouts coming this weekend to help him clear the trail area and to start working on that so he's moving along with the Casertano project.

Mr. Sherman said it was a different scout that he had met with as well for the installation of the kiosk at the Ten Mile Lowlands and he's still planning to do it; he's got to keep after him to see what's he's doing.

Mr. Sherman said he understood the scout got his approvals at the scout level now he's got to get Suzanne to sign off on it; the scout said he's still going to do it.

Mr. Sherman said there were a number of people who were at the marketplace who were interested in the Casertano property because they had seen some activity there – they saw the parking lot going in. He said he was happy to pull out the map and show where the trail was going to go and that a scout was working on it – he said it was a property coming alive and will be move accessible.

IX. New Business

Mr. Sherman said there were no new business items to discuss.

Mr. Sherman said if members have items they want put on the agenda they need to let him know about five days ahead of time so they can get that posted properly.

Ms. Nichols said she had to commend this group and the town for these new brochures (open space maps) – she said they're wonderful and they caused a lot of buzz around town. She said she didn't know where they had them other than the town hall – she asked if there was though to put some at the Chamber of Commerce's office. She also suggest taking some to Denali Outdoor Store and she said she took some to the

nursery because that's the place people are involved in outdoor activities. She said the flyers were a nice presentation.

Ms. Simone said there weren't flyers at the Chamber Office but she will send them over; they're also at the library.

Ms. Heritage asked how many properties have one of these.

Ms. Simone said ten and there are more properties to come so as they get trails they'll get things updated and they'll have better maps. She said the town is switching over to a new GIS system so they will be able to have new maps – some of them don't have the trail but just a map so when the new system is up and running they'll be to add this information.

Ms. Nichols said as your kids (volunteers) do more work you might revise the properties. She said the only thing she questioned for her personally was how rugged it was to walk some of these places – so that might be a piece of information to add is how strenuous is it and how accessible is it for some of us who are older.

Ms. Simone said they could use terms to say 'steep' so that people would know what to expect.

Ms. Collins comment that details about adding trail difficulty to the flyers.

Mr. DeVlyder made a comment that the Dime Saving property should be renamed, that Dime Savings is not in business anymore.

Ms. Simone said the town has a renaming policy which was provided to Commission members in the open space binders.

Mr. Mercugliano said could they also add to that if they were going to discuss that property perhaps what inroads could they might make to the adjoining private property holders so that folks could have access to the property.

Ms. Simone said that is a long term project that they are working on – she said she's working on the open space initiate which she spoke to the Commission a couple of months ago and they are working with the Parks Departments and the Public Works Department to devise who's responsible for what in terms of maintenance and how to approach things and then Commission then would weigh in on how the Commission would want to be involved and at what level of planning

and things like that; she said this is something the Commission has done previously like at the Casertano property parking lot – this Commission reviewed different scenarios that staff came up with regarding the pros and cons of the parking lot's location and the costs at each location – this was something they then reported to the town council – so she thought this was a larger planning projects certainly staff could work – she said she didn't know if she had things flushed out to that degree but certainly they could start the conversation and she could start to look at private property owners.

Ms. Simone said as well the town did receive property from the state and there may be ability and that was her hope that they'd be able to turn that into a parking area and access – it's where the old exit ramp off 84 used to be. She said she hasn't looked at it in detail – but they could look at it.

Mr. DeVlyder asked if there was ravine on that lot where people were dumping.

Ms. Simone said she is aware that the State gave that small lot to the town but didn't know the current condition or how it's treated.

Mr. DeVlyder asked if a copy of the property map could be sent out with the next month's minutes.

Ms. Simone asked if other members wanted a copy. Other members indicated they did not take the new open space maps for themselves, but handed them out at the Fall Festival. She stated copies will be available to members to update their open space binders.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Sherman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

Moved by Mr. Abdihar. Seconded by Mr. Mr. Mercugliano. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

Respectfully submitted:

Carla Mills
Recording Secretary