

**REGULAR MEETING
CHESHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2014
TOWN HALL 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET CHESHIRE CT
COUNCIL CHAMBERS AT 7:00 PM**

Members present: Bill Sherman, Matt Abdifar, Bob DeVylder, Dave Mercugliano and Carrie Collins-White.

Members not present: Jodee Heritage and Daniel Grasso.

Staff: Suzanne Simone.

Guest: Patrick Hedden.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Sherman called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Ms. Collins-White called the roll.

Members in attendance were Bill Sherman, Matt Abdifar, Bob DeVylder, Dave Mercugliano and Carrie Collins-White.

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

Ms. Collins-White determined there were enough members present for a quorum.

Members not present were Jodee Heritage and Daniel Grasso.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the pledge of allegiance.

V. Acceptance of Minutes – Regular Meeting – March 12, 2014

Motion: To approved the minutes of the regular meeting of March 12, 2014 with corrections. Pg. 1 “January 11, 2013” to “January 13, 2104”; Pg. 2 “Adbhir” to “Abdifar”; pg. 3 “perimeter” to “parameters”; pg. 5 “Bychowski” to “Puchalski”; pg. 7 2nd parag. “”will” to “will have”; pg.8 “Abdhir” to “Abdifar”.

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

VI. Communications

1. SWCD Soil and Water Spring 2014 Newsletter (To be handed out at meeting)

Ms. Simone said in this edition of the Southwest Conservation District newsletter they have a listing their annual plant sale – you can place an order to purchase plants and in this edition they also have some information about some new websites – EcosystemGardening.com as well as certifiedwildlifehabitat.com and just in general provides some information as what’s gone on recently and some awards and conferences out.

Commission members received copies of the newsletter.

Chairman Sherman asked if the newsletters were available in the town hall.

Ms. Simone stated no but this information could be posted downstairs in the open space area we have downstairs so people could take advantage of it if they are interested.

VII. Calendar – Events

Chairman Sherman stated there are programs at the library and Trail’s Day – these items will be covered under unfinished business and are upcoming and are usually of very good interest.

- 1. Earth Day Programs at Library, April 21 and 22, 2014**
- 2. Trails Day, June 7, 2014**

VIII. Unfinished Business

1. Social Media

a. Town Facebook page

Chairman Sherman said if Commission members received sort of a policy memo that the town has developed to give some guidance on how that (the Facebook page) is to be used.

Ms. Simone explained that the Commission may be aware that the town has embarked on a Facebook page the last six weeks or so and with that the town has been looking into on then how to extend that message to the 22 boards, commissions and committees and the town did come up with this policy notice which identifies preferences on how the commissions can use Facebook – the town’s Facebook website and to achieve that their asking that Commission’s go through the chair – identify what information they would like to have posted and then that information would be sent to the staff liaison and who would then post it to the Facebook page.

Ms. Simone said people who have their own individual Facebook page will be able to post messages or link messages to the town’s Facebook page through their own personal accounts – and as an example we are seeing we are getting traffic on the Facebook page and with the bulky waste notification there have been 1400 people that have received that message.

Ms. Simone said the goal is to have all of these boards and commissions post their information so its broad to a wider spectrum of people so maybe out of those 1400 people none of them know about open space but now that they’ve linked to the town’s Facebook page they will be receiving information and updates that otherwise we would not be able to send to them so that is the purpose behind that.

Chairman Sherman asked if Commissioner Collins-White had any communication with staff – he said he knew she had planted some seeds earlier on on this process.

Ms. Collins-White said not yet but it’s great to see that they’ve got this guidance document for us – seeing now that we’ve got that in place and based on the policy that we can post to page we do have these events upcoming so it may be worth starting to get some attraction now and then repost before the event – she said she didn’t know if that was something they wanted to do as a group – she said she’d be happy to start it off or if it was something that would go through Bill or Suzanne.

Ms. Simone said for the upcoming two events she did plan on posting them this week – maybe tomorrow and for Trails Day we could certainly work on the message.

Ms. Collins-White said if we post it to our individual pages then our friends could also see it and we could get some traction on it so maybe that's something we could do as a group.

Ms. Simone stated that was a good idea.

b. Volunteers to edit video

Chairman Sherman said along the idea of the Facebook page we had the idea of trying to link some video and Commission member Heritage had some discussions and reported back to Suzanne the past month on that – so maybe she could update the Commission on that.

Ms. Simone said Jodee had informed her that she had spoken with a town vendor who may be able to do this work and that there would likely be a stipend involved – there's no set amount as of yet but this person does have the technical background and would be able to do that work.

Ms. Simone said additional she did reach out to library and spoke to the director about using some of the teenagers that use the media room there – that they may want to volunteer and edit some of the video so that's something that she's working on also.

Mr. Abdifar said as far as Facebook – he liked the page – he said it's great – that he would encourage his fellow Commission members to 'like' it on Facebook themselves and have their family members do it as well – he said there's a lot of information and we need to try to get that page going.

2. Property Updates

a. Management Plans

Ms. Simone said to date the majority of the properties have management plans.

Ms. Simone said the next management plan that will be drafted is for the Paulchski property which is the most recent acquisition – 122 acres on Mountain Road so that is something staff would be working on this spring and summer and will bring the draft to the Commission.

Ms. Simone stated this is an essential piece next to Roaring Brook – next to Ben’s property – both of which have management plans.

Chairman Sherman said you may recall that we passed a number of management plans over the past several meetings and this is keeping that process moving by staff.

b. Open space maps

Chairman Sherman said next is the open space maps and Suzanne can update us on that and as most of you know the maps are posted here in the town hall.

Ms. Simone reported that since the ten town property maps were created in September 2013 9000 copies have been copied and distributed from town hall.

Ms. Simone said in addition to having the kiosk downstairs – the information kiosk in the lobby we also have maps available in the Planning Office and there’s also a display on the lower level of the library we also have all the information posted online and we will continue to work on more property maps as we get the last management plan for Puchalski finalized we will work on that map.

Ms. Simone said they seems as though they’ve been well received and its encouraging to see that when she’s checked the stock a lot of the properties that people knew of that a lot of those brochures are finding their way home with people – so that’s encouraging.

Mr. Abdifar said something that’s coming up this weekend (Saturday) is the Chamber Expose so we should try to get some of those over to Sheldon Dill to kind of just have there – they give out bags (with information).

Mr. Abdifar volunteered to bring the maps and see if they could be inserted into the bags.

Ms. Simone said she’d see how many copies they have and get them to him.

c. Spring preparation

Chairman Sherman said now that spring is here and the weather is clearing more can be done – he asked Suzanne for an update on the activities to be done.

Ms. Simone said she met with Bob Ceccolini from the Parks Department to see check on some of the open space properties. She reported that in the winter the Parks Department has worked on constructing the kiosk for the Ten Mile Lowlands so from what she understands it's been completed and ready to be put in the location in about a month or so – we've identified a location that is directly at the entrance – that you'll get good visibility kiosk as you're coming from either direction on Dundee Drive.

Ms. Simone said they will also work on clearing some of the trail so that you can really see the entrance and cut back some of the invasive species that are right along the edge of the trail to make it more user friendly.

Ms. Simone said she also did go out with Bob to the Casertano property to look at an area where Patrick is going to be working to construct a kiosk and that area needs to be prepared from the Parks Department and they will be working on that – they are aware of what the deadline is for the Trails event on June 7, 2014 so they had stated they would work with that schedule to get the area prepped so Patrick has enough time to get access to work there.

Ms. Simone said so now that the weather is changing and spring is actually here we can get out more to these properties and see what needs to be done to clean things up and get things ready so people can hit the trails.

Chairman Sherman said if any members of the Commission find themselves at or on any of these properties or if any of the public are out on any of these properties and sees a need for some maintenance to please get in touch with the town hall – the Planning Office – or Suzanne – leave a message for her so that we'll all be informed of what may need to be done so we can keep the properties safe and accessible.

3. Spring Eco- Events

Chairman Sherman said they've already had a few events this spring and they have a couple coming up on the calendar – he again asked

Suzanne to summaries the past couple of events that have taken place.

Ms. Simone said so far this spring they've had four events and they've been pretty well attended – they had a program on organic herb growing – nonnative invasive plant removal – a program on the North American porcupine and a talk on Mountain Lions in Connecticut. She said we did get good crowds – people were enthusiasm and asked a lot of questions - we are seeing a lot of people through the years that are keeping an eye out for these programs and they are returning – so we have two more programs coming up in two weeks on April 21 is where to hike in Cheshire held at the Cheshire Public Library at 7:00 p.m. and the next night (April 22) starting at 7:00 p.m. also at the library is where to hike in hidden Connecticut.

Mr. DeVlyder said it was not really a question but it is – he said about a month ago he looked out his back yard and there were 17 deer out there.

Mr. DeVlyder said we can't have a garden or anything else in the yard anymore.

Mr. DeVlyder asked if there's ever been a program talking about the deer problem in this town because we definitely have one.

Ms. Simone stated not in the Spring Eco Events – they have been focused what people can do in their back yards to make gardens or different animals not necessarily on deer – no there isn't a program on that.

Mr. DeVlyder said this will be able to do that – right now and I'm not the only one – there are a lot of people in my area that have just given up on having gardens because of the deer problem. He said when you look out and see 17 deer grazing in the back yard – you put out a box of impatiens and the next day they're gone.

Mr. DeVlyder said it might be a topic for one of these upcoming events.

4. Trails Day Event

a. Program Summary

Ms. Simone said CT National Trails Day is being held on June 7 and the town is sponsoring a program at the Casertano property

on Marion Avenue and this property has been the subject of extensive work by Patrick Hedden – an eagle scout who we will hear from momentarily. She said there will be a new trail created on this property and this will be the first public unveiling of the property.

b. Presentation of Property Update by Patrick Hedden

Mr. Hedden addressed the Commission.

Mr. Hedden explained he gave Ms. Simone some pictures of the trail from September and from this past weekend of what we've worked on the trail – he said so far everything is passable - there are new trails cleared and water bars installed in certain areas and there are a few minor problems here and there that just have to be fixed.

Mr. Hedden stated overall its going very well – he said they hoped to have it done by the end of May.

Mr. Hedden explained some of the work that took place on the property that has made the trail more scenic and provides a better view of Meriden Mountain.

Mr. Hedden said he has seen several people out there every other day hiking.

Mr. Hedden stated its going well.

Chairman Sherman asked Mr. Hedden if he had a team of volunteers that he relies on.

Mr. Hedden said his close friends and different volunteers from a Boy Scout troop have come in – he said they are working on getting the water off the trail so it's easier to walk on.

Chairman Sherman said he's been on the property a couple of times and it did need a lot of work so he is very eager to get back on and see the improvements – he said he's especially grateful for the new parking area to make that property more accessible to folks.

Mr. Mercugliano said just as recap when Mr. Hedden was presenting this project to the Commission – he said the new trail addition is approximately how long.

Mr. Hedden said he didn't know exactly how long but he would figure that out.

Mr. Mercugliano said and this is through what troop.

Mr. Hedden stated troop 51.

Mr. Mercugliano thanked Mr. Hedden and said he knew he put a lot of work into this already.

Chairman Sherman said the big reveal would be on Trails Day (June 7).

Mr. Abdifar asked if he had enough volunteers.

Mr. Hedden said he did and there was just a little bit of work that had to be done.

Ms. Simone said and for the kiosk – do you have the materials already for that.

Mr. Hedden said he has not gotten the materials - he's working on getting them.

Ms. Simone said there may be the ability for the town to purchase some if not all of the material – we are working on that now to see what funds are available so she'd follow-up with him was they get that all figured out.

Mr. Hedden said he expected to work on the kiosk in the next few weeks – after the Parks and rec Department moves the mulch pile then get can really start to get the cement in for the posts – but within the next month he would start work on it.

Ms. Simone said so you'll construct the kiosk on site.

Mr. Hedden said they'd start the pre-fab the main structural part first in a garage and as soon as they could out the cement in so it could set and put the rest of it out.

Ms. Simone thanked Mr. Hedden for all of his hard work – she said it looks great out there.

Chairman Sherman thanked him and said he was looking forward to seeing the trails again.

c. Detail day's events (commission attendance, materials to give out)

Chairman Sherman said they still need to work on some logistics for that day – they typically have some handouts and maybe bottles of water and a welcome canopy tent or something – we can figure out these sorts of things when the time arises – any ideas should be passed along to himself or Suzanne and the next meeting they can go over it in more detail.

Mr. Mercugliano said with Matt's suggestion with the maps –we might have the opportunity as people exit the event on Trails day to give them a bag with perhaps some of the best hiking trail maps – he said he thought the maps were great and just getting them out there the more the residents would have the opportunity to see what's there and utilize it.

Ms. Collins-White said at last year's event she recalled a lot of people outside of Cheshire coming to the event as well so we could have those for town of town people too.

The Trails Days is on Saturday, June 7. There is no event rain date – rain cancels the event.

IX New Business

1. High School invitation to explore open space

Chairman Sherman said Jodee heritage a draft invitation regarding open space for teachers at the high school.

Chairman Sherman said she brought this up at the last meeting and met with Suzanne since the last meeting.

Ms. Simone said the draft that Jodee came up with at the last meeting is an invitation that she worked on and that she would like to decimate to the science teachers at all of the Cheshire schools as well as to the environmental studies teacher at the high school and Cheshire Academy.

Ms. Simone said she (Jodee) wanted some feedback on the content of this invitation and any suggestion about formatting or anything along those lines.

Commission members reviewed the invitation.

Chairman Sherman said he thought it was wonderful – he said if any other members wanted to chime in and give Suzanne and/or Jodee the okay to reproduce and distribute.

Ms. Collins-White asked if this was something that would be given to students too.

Ms. Simone said this was something that would be sent to teachers but that she could not speak in detail about that as to the full intent of that is.

Ms. Collins-White said maybe this is something we could have as part of our marketing efforts as well – seeing how it goes with the first distribution.

Mr. Mercugliano said June 7 still falls within this academic year – he said he wondered if the opportunity was there to promote the Trails Day through the electronic media to distribute to all parents in Cheshire – event taking a little bit of what Jodee has put there as far as advertising the event the week before in a timely fashion – he said what she has produced is excellent to distribute to specific teachers but also to get that information dispersed to all parents in town – he said he thinks there’s still a whole bunch of folks that don’t know about the resource – and it might increase the town’s Trails day event and to highlight Patrick’s work.

Chairman Sherman said he’s getting the sense from the group to give Jodee the go-ahead.

2. Solarize Cheshire

Chainman Sherman said they had a member of the public - Tim White who wanted to give an update.

Mr. White said he thinks it does relate to the environment as solar power is a reduction in emissions here in town and in Connecticut) on the Solarize Cheshire program.

Mr. White provided the Commission a brief recap regarding the Solarize Cheshire program that just ended yesterday. He said the program is between the state – the town and a not for profit and three of Connecticut’s approximately 50 electric solar installers.

Mr. White provided the Commission with a program recap as a follow-up to his previous presentation to the Commission.

Mr. White said going into the program last October they had about 31 homes with solar electric panels and that had occurred over the past 7-10 years and over the past five months they have at least 40 homes maybe 50 homes (not a final number) contracted to get their homes solar electric panels installed on their roof within the next 60 to 90 days.

Mr. White provided a commentary regarding the solar panel program and stated he thought overall the program was a success and thanked the Chairman for giving him some time to promote the program.

Mr. DeVlyder asked if you needed to put a new roof on before you put the solar panels on.

Mr. White went into some general details about the installation process but said no –you don't need a new roof.

X. Adjournment

Chairman Sherman stated the next meeting would be held Wednesday, May 14, 2014

Chairman Sherman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. DeVlyder moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Abdifar. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

Respectfully submitted by:

**Carla Mills
Recording Secretary**