

**TOWN OF CHESHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2014
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL ROOM 207 AT 7:00 PM**

Members present: Bill Sherman, Matt Abdifar, Bob DeVylder and Jodee Heritage.

Members not present: Dave Mercugliano, Carrie Collins-White and Daniel Grasso.

Staff: Suzanne Simone.

Council Liaison: Sylvia Nichols.

Guest: Jeff Gebeau, Meriden Record Journal reporter.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Sherman called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

II. Roll Call

Ms. Heritage called the roll.

Members present were Bill Sherman, Matt Abdifar, Carrie Collins-White, Bob DeVylder and Jodee Heritage.

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

There were enough members present for a quorum.

Members not present were Dave Mercugliano and Daniel Grasso.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the pledge of allegiance.

V. Acceptance of Minutes – Regular Meeting – October 8, 2014

Motion: To approve the minutes from the October 8, 2014 meeting with no corrections.

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

VI. Approval of 2015 Meeting Dates

Motion: To approve the Cheshire Environment Commission 2015 meeting dates. Meeting will be held on the second Wednesday of each month in room 115 at 7:00 pm at the town hall. The November meeting will take place on Thursday due to the Veteran's Day holiday.

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

VII. Communications

The Commission reviewed the following communications:

1. Dime Savings Management Plan
2. Commissioners invitation to Town Council hosted Holiday Party

Ms. Simone said she's heard from three members that were interested in attending (the party). She said she needs to report to the town manager tomorrow as to who will be attending so interested members should let her know.

3. The Habitat, CACIWC Fall 2014 Newsletter, Volume 26, Number 4 (To be handed out at the meeting)

Verbal Communication:

4. Cheshire Rotary Club Invitation

Chairman Sherman said he received an invitation from the representative of the Cheshire Rotary Club to speak at an upcoming lunch meeting January 8, 2015.

Chairman Sherman stated this item would be taken up under new business.

VIII. Calendar – Events

Holiday Party, December 18, 2014: This event was covered under communications.

Earth Day, Wednesday, April 22, 2015: Chairman Sherman said this item would be discussed under unfinished business.

IX. Unfinished Business

1. Ten Mile Lowlands Hike, November 15, 2014 Summary

Ms. Collins-White and Ms. Heritage provided a hike update.

Ms. Collins-White said there were four attendees. She said the hike was nice but it was cold.

There was discussion about the number of people who signed up and the actual number of people who showed up for the hike.

Ms. Collins-White said a few who attended the hike said they'd like to return in the spring to the vernal pool.

Chairman Sherman asked if they were able to follow the trail.

Ms. Collins-White replied yes saying it was a really easy trail.

2. Earth Day 2015: Events

Chairman Sherman said around this time, there are many events hosted by the Library but as a Commission we can certainly host something like a hike.

Ms. Simone said in checking with the Library to see what dates are available for program, it seems as though a lot of dates in April are already booked so there's not really the opportunity to have a whole compliment of programs that month.

Ms. Simone said if the Commission is interested in doing an event – maybe having a speaker come she can get the information together for the Commission of what dates are available but understanding that those dates may go quite quickly since much of the month is already gone between Friends of the Library books sale and other events that take over a large chunk of time.

Ms. Simone explained that most people know where the Library is located (so it's a good location for events). She said she works with the Library and uses their email blast which reaches quite an audience of people (to publicize events). She said there may be an opportunity to use the Senior Center or even Town Hall (for an event).

Chairman Sherman asked about some of the folks from last year coming back (people who gave talks).

Ms. Simone said she's working with the Library and we are looking at hosting some spring events that are not so much geared towards Earth Day but geared towards spring that could take place in March or in the winter time.

Ms. Simone said its tough attendance wise when you advertise in the winter - you never know what the weather is going to be and who's going to show up so that's something they are trying to work on to keep the momentum up of the Planning Department and the Library working on these programs – she said it seems as though they have a pretty good following and people now come to expect it in the spring.

Chairman Sherman asked what Commission members their thoughts about leading another walk.

There was discussion about having a walk in April.

Ms. Simone explained there are a lot of opportunities and she thought April – May was the best time (for an event).

Ms. Nichols asked about having something outside of a physical activity – there could be a lecture or slide presentation.

Ms. Simone said when she's done the "Hiking in Cheshire" and they got between 40-60 who showed up and for most hikes we don't get that many - so you don't know if it's just a date conflict on that day you are hosting the hike or people would just rather hike on their own then in a group or would just rather look at slides.

There was discussion scheduling conflicts when holding events.

Chairman Sherman talked about hiking groups – he said some of those folks walk during the week and a number of those folks might not be able to go up Roaring Brook because it's challenging but maybe (they could hike) Ten Mile Lowlands.

Ms. Simone said that information is sent to the Senior Center but they don't get a large turnout of older folks turning out for the hikes but you do get a good representation at the talks.

Chairman Sherman said he thought the consensus was to do another walk but we don't need to make decision on which property. He said it would probably be good to do that by February.

Ms. Collins-White asked about what presentation topics were being considered for Earth Day.

Ms. Simone said what they are looking at for this spring (in March) is to have someone from the Regional Water Authority come in and give a talk about the recreational opportunities because a lot of people don't know you can go on to their properties as well as Connecticut Forestry and Park Association. She said they would likely have them come in to give talks.

Ms. Simone said we do have the Quinnipiac Blue Trail that runs through Cheshire and we'll probably do the hiking event again. She noted that we got a really good response for gardening programs so we'll have a couple of those as well.

Ms. Nichols talked about getting someone from a nursery to give a talk.

Ms. Simone said if the Commission wanted to pay someone to give a talk and use money out of their budget to pay that's certainly fine but she didn't know of a particular person who does those talks but she's working with the Library – she said they are really trying to bring in speakers that have already sort of gone the Library circuit or at least we know somebody who has seen them.

Ms. Simone said they get a good turnout for programs on large mammals. She talked about a past event where the speaker brought a live animal.

Chairman Sherman said it sounds like Suzanne is working on things so if there's anything in particular now's the time to bring other input (from the Commission).

Ms. Simone said if there's a speaker they'd like to see and if there's money in the budget (the Commission's budget) they can plan something. She said right now there's not money in the Planning Office budget.

3. Publicity in Schools

Ms. Heritage said the schools have all the information (about the open space properties) and about having a hike and if they are looking to hold a hike they have the contact information.

Chairman Sherman asked if Ms. Heritage could follow up on the schools she left the information with.

Ms. Heritage said she could follow-up to see if there's any interest from the schools, maybe for a spring event.

Ms. Nichols asked if there was anything that could be developed that could be a child friendly learning experience (where kids could go out and identify certain things on properties); a self-guided trail. She talked about a few ideas for an outdoor nature experience for children.

Ms. Simone said that may not be something she's specifically do – design the curriculum for the school but she could get the information to the teachers – she could provide them with information so that they could develop that (program).

Ms. Simone said they did have a tree trail at Quinnipiac Park and that the trees were numbered and there was information available. She said many of those trees are now gone – she said it could be difficult with perennials if you are not tending to that area.

Chairman Sherman said he wondered if Parks and Rec Department might have something in their budget.

There was discussion about a nature trail project and how to develop the project.

4. Property Updates

Chairman Sherman said the kiosk at the Casertano property is completed – it looks every nice. He asked staff to provide a property update.

Ms. Simone said the kiosk at Casertano is complete and posted as well as the Ten Mile Lowlands is posted. She said the kiosk at the Piechowski property – that is something an eagle scout is working on right now – she said this is something that's been designed to be movable because at some point the town is looking into access to that property. She said they're informally working on parking and they (at some point) can relocate the kiosk and have that information can be posted.

Ms. Simone provided a follow up regarding benches.

Ms. Simone explained she did send a list to the Parks Department for properties that would work to have benches – DeDominicis, Casertano, Ten Mile Lowlands and Roaring Brook. She said the Park Department informed her the benches cost \$1500 which includes the memorial plaque and shipping and that all of the town benches through the Parks Department have been donated in memory of someone – family and friends will donate to the Parks Gift Fund and once they receive enough donations they purchase a bench and the Park staff installs the bench.

Ms. Simone explained in communication with Bob Ceccolini, the Director of the Parks Department he suggested that if the Commission is interested or if you knew of someone who wanted to donate a bench or start accumulating those funds, that this Commission could use the Parks Gift fund and have it earmarked for a particular bench (location).

Ms. Simone said she looked a little bit further into this anticipating that there might be some inquires about solicitation for funds and in the past there have been a couple of other Commissions that have asked about doing fund raising activities or trying to solicit funds and the town attorney did weigh in and it's been suggested if that's something the Commission is interested in that she gets more detailed information and contact the town attorney again to make sure – but it does seem that it's something that has to go through the Council.

Ms. Simone explained that the Council would have to be aware the Commission is seeking to do a particular fund raising for funds then the Council would then authorize and set the scope for that. She could look into that further if the Commission is interested.

5. Town Naming Policy

Chairman Sherman said they talked about the naming policy at a prior meeting and the naming policy has been redistributed for tonight's meeting. He said they talked about renaming the Dime Savings Bank property and Silva Nichols is here to update us on the conversations she had with the Town Council chair with respect to the process.

Ms. Nichols explained basically they can follow these rules – there is an option to go directly through the Council or to go to Michael Milone and have him bring it to the Council.

Ms. Nichols said in discussions with the Council regarding the Dime Savings Bank name change – the Council's feeling was that as long as the name met these guidelines which were either geographical or historical or some physical characteristic that would help identify it that

it would not be an issue to rename it based on the rules; she talked about requests to name properties after people; she said it was her opinion that if they (the Commission) drafted a request to us (the Council) to rename this property whatever name they choose that it also should go in conjunction with a letter to Michael Milone stating they are requesting approval from the Town Council for a name change – she said she thought this should be the way it should go as long as they follow the rules and regulations.

Mr. DeVylder talked about the location of the property running adjacent to the Yankee Expressway for the reason to name the property the Yankee Expressway Highlands.

Ms. Nichols said if that's the name they choose to present then she thinks they can document it with that explanation – the reason why and make people aware of what the Yankee Expressway was or is or how that name came about.

Ms. Nichols shared her thoughts about how the Commission should move forward with their interest in and how to go about renaming the property.

Chairman Sherman asked if there were any volunteers who wanted to take a crack at it (drafting a letter). He said at the October meeting they agreed the proposed name was fitting to the property.

Motion: To come up with the first draft to rename the Dime Savings property to the Yankee Expressway Highlands and have that first draft ready by the next meeting in January (2015) for the Council to look over and then the draft will go to the Town Council and Michael Milone to rename the property.

Moved by Ms. Heritage. Seconded Mr. DeVylder.

There was discussion and review of the naming process criteria to follow for naming a property.

Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

Chairman Sherman and Mr. DeVylder would work on the draft for the renaming of the property.

X. New Business

Chairman Sherman said an item of new business that he had as a result of a verbal communication – he said he received an invitation from a

member of the Cheshire Rotary Club to speak to the Rotary Club about what the Environment Commission is and what we are up to and that sort of thing – he said it would be a ten minute presentation at a lunch meeting on Thursday, January 8, 2015 at noon at the Waverly Tavern.

Chairman Sherman said he plans to go and he'd be pleased if someone else from the Commission and or Suzanne was available to join him.

XI. Adjournment

Chairman Sherman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted by:

**Carla Mills
Recording Secretary**