I. Call to Order

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

II. Roll Call

Mr. Sherman called the roll.

Members in attendance were Randy Yale, Robert DeVylder, David DeFusco, and Bill Sherman.

Members not in attendance were Bonnie Mayer and John Pepper.

Staff liaison Suzanne Simone, Environmental Planner and Anne Giddings, Town Council liaison were present.

Town resident Ellen McKinley was also present.

III. Determination of Quorum

It was determined there were enough members present for a quorum.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the pledge of allegiance.

V. Acceptance of Minutes – October 13, 2010 – Regular Meeting

Mr. Yale called for a motion to approve the minutes.

Motion: To approve the minutes from the October 13, 2010 regular meeting with corrections; pg. 4 Under #3 1st paragraph “likes” to “likes the design”; pg. 6 8th paragraph “to they” to “so they”; “nay” to “any” pg. 8 8th paragraph “though” to “thought”.

Mr. DeFusco moved to adopt the minutes. Seconded by Mr. Sherman.

Motion approved unanimously of those Commission members present.
VI. Communications

1. Fall 2010 SWCD Newsletter, Soil and Water (To be handed out at meeting)

Ms. Simone handed out copies of this communication to Commission members; the communication was reviewed.

2. Fall 2010 CACIWC Newsletter, The Habitat, Volume 22, Number 3 (To be handed out at meeting)

Ms. Simone handed out copies of this communication to Commission members; the communication was reviewed.

3. Naming of Town Owned Property Policy

This communication was sent to Commission members in their packet. This item is also listed under new business.

4. Staff Memo: Potential Earth Day Programs

This communication was sent to Commission members in their packet. This item is also listed under unfinished business.

5. Commission Year to Date Budget Report

This communication was sent to Commission members in their packet.

6. Staff October 26, 2010 Email: Earth Day Dates reserved at library

This communication was reviewed.

7. Staff Notations: Spring 2011 Calendar

This communication was reviewed; the calendar corresponds with Earth Day events.

8. Kiosk Design Specifications

Ms. Simone stated there was discussion at the last meeting about the kiosk design. Commission members have been provided with specifications for building a kiosk based on other kiosks built on other properties. This item is also listed under unfinished business.

9. Staff Memo: Mixville Hills Property Access
Ms. Simone stated she would hand this item out to Commission members. This item would be covered under unfinished business.

10. Staff Memo: Casertano Parking / Trail Access and Draft Motion

This item would be reviewed under unfinished business.

11. Staff Memo: Open Space Signage

This item would be reviewed under unfinished business.

12. Other – none.

VII. Calendar – Events

1. Earth Day- Friday, April 22, 2011 (Park bulletin listing deadline: Jan 10, 2011)

Mr. Yale stated that if the Commission was going to advertise in the park’s bulletin information would have to be submitted by the next Commission meeting (December 8, 2010).

Ms. Simone stated the information had to be in to the Parks Department by January 10, 2011.

Mr. Yale suggested the Commission decide by this meeting or the next meeting what the program details were so the information could be submitted for the bulletin.

This item would be discussed under unfinished business number six - Earth Day April 2011 Events.

VIII. Unfinished Business

1. Tip of the Month

Mr. DeFusco said he had not yet draft a tip of the month would be happy to draft an idea for the Tip of the Month if any Commission member had a tip suggestion.

The Commission talked about drafting a tip regarding the composting of leaves. Members discussed the Town requirements for picking up leaves.

Ms. Giddings said she though the leaves had to be placed in paper bags.
There was discussion regarding the Town requirements for leave composing. There was discussion regarding the fact the Town does not actually compose the leaves in Cheshire – the leaves are taken out of town.

Ms. Simone said if there is an interest in doing the composing tip she suggested the facts be gathered from the Public Works Department as to exactly why they use the paper bags – she noted that right now it is just speculation on the Commission’s part as to why they use paper bags.

Ms. Giddings said a tip regarding composing leaves was a good idea– she said some do have space on their won property to do it themselves.

Mr. DeFusco asked if people should be encouraged to use the paper bags or compose the leaves themselves.

The Commission agreed that the tip of the month should be about leave composing.

Ms. Simone said if Mr. DeFusco needed any specific information about the town policies for leave composing she would get that information for him.

2. Casertano Property

a. Proposed Property Access and Trail Maintenance

Ms. Simone said what was sent to the Commission was a copy of a report that staff prepared pertaining to the proposed parking area, the proposed crosswalk, and the trail.

Ms. Simone reviewed the map of the proposed parking area.

The Commission reviewed the map.

Ms. Simone said with the Police Department identified an area that may serve for parking – this area was outlined on the map. The dimensions of this area are in line with what is required per the Planning and Zoning regulations. The parking spaces are required to be a minimum of 10’ in width and 20’ in length and factoring in some footage for grading – that averages out to a 12’ by 21’ parking space with a total square footage of 2,520’ – in a straight line maybe with diagonal stalls that would accommodate ten vehicles.

Ms. Simone explained the crosswalk would compliment that parking area – the crosswalk would not be in the curb cut itself as there are regulations against people walking in an area where cars are entering and existing.
The crosswalk is proposed to be directly adjacent to that curb cut; so there would be another curb cut with a crosswalk painted into and out of the parking area and then that would bring you to the other side of the road.

Ms. Simone explained that when she and Bill Sherman were out there you could clearly see there were deposits of soil right along Marion Road which is depicted on the map; you could see there was storage or stockpiling of soils.

Mr. Sherman distributed pictures that he took of the area under review.

Ms. Simone said in looking at the regulations that govern what’s to happen – the Open Space ordinance requires that any new entrance onto a property has to go before the Town Council for their review and approval.

Ms. Simone explained that when she and Mr. Sherman were out at the site they found what appears to be an existing trail that is right where the stockpile material is and there is basically a saddle in between two large outcroppings.

Ms. Simone said there seems to be an existing trail and it goes directly into the trail that you can access from the other side. She said so with this being the case that would not require any additional approval – it would just require maintenance.

Ms. Simone gave Commission members a description of the terrain and the landscape of the area, including the information that there are some hazard trees leaning across the trails. She said she went out to the property with Public Works and they would be willing to go out there and help remove the trees – just the trees that are clearly potential public hazards.

Ms. Simone stated that Public Works will not be cutting trees on the banks just cutting the dead trees or the hazard trees that are directly in the pathway.

Mr. DeFusco asked if the mound of dirt would have to be flattened.

Ms. Simone said apparently there is good top soil underneath there – there is a lot of vegetation on top. She said all of that would get removed - as soon as that material gets removed the trail would be exposed so you would be able to walk directly onto the property that way.

Ms. McKinley explained that probably fifty or sixty years ago they were stripping all of the top soil off of this property and those two piles are where they started stripping all of the top soil off of this property and then
they got stopped by some agency – she said the mounds are good top soil – the mounds are actually stripped top soil from this property.

Ms. Simone thanked Ms. McKinley for the information. She said the top soil could be a value to the Town and they could take it out of this area and use it elsewhere.

There was discussion about removing the stock pile of soil. Ms. Simone said removing a stock pile of soil if it’s creating a problem of gaining access to the property can be removed - is not a violation – it’s not the same as stripping of soil.

The Commission reviewed the draft motions handed out at tonight’s meeting.

Ms. Simone said as it was discussed previously – the Town has a lease on the property where the proposed parking is to be. That lease comes up for renewal in January 2011 so the Town Manager suggested that if this was an area that seemed to work for the Police Department which it has and if this Commission is agreeable to it that a motion be made and then the Council could be notified that there is an interest in setting aside an area for parking and then that could be written into any future leases.

Mr. Yale said then the Town Council does not have to approve the entrance because there seems to be an existing trail but they have to approve the parking area.

Ms. Simone said at a minimum the parking area would go before the Planning and Zoning Commission – she talked about some information per State Statutes that because its Town property where there is a proposal for any type of development – parking lot, building, ball fields – it has to go before Planning and Zoning.

Ms. Simone said it’s likely it would be the Public Works Department that would represent the application because they would be the ones conducting the work.

Ms. McKinley asked about the proposed location of the parking area. She asked why the parking couldn’t be on the same side of the road as the trail access. She said that cars zip down Marion Road at 50 miles an hour during rush hour.

Ms. Simone said to do that they would need to have access to have a car pull in and not have to back out onto the road and have one-point of entrance. She said this would require clearing of quite a bit of area of
mature trees as oppose to across the street – its already cleared. That area is not going to be a paved parking area – in the future there may be opportunities to move it to the other side but as of right now this proposed location has been identified as something that would work with the conditions of the road and with the site line issues.

Mr. Sherman talked about when the Commission originally looked at the site and how they were going to access the property – the current proposal is meant to be an initial stage – he said ideally they would love to be able to park on the west side of Marion Road but pending further development and clearing in there the current location is the initial solution but maybe long term they could get a bigger lot.

Ms. Simone said right now they have no access to the property and they need access to be able to even do the work on the property to get the trail functioning.

Ms. Simone said as of right now the trails are for hiking – no biking has been indicated for the site and certainly no ATVs. ATVs are not allowed on Town properties.

Ms. McKinley said ATVs are there.

Ms. Simone suggested Ms. McKinley contact the Police regarding ATVs on town property.

Ms. Simone said what was handed out tonight were three separate motions just so that things could stay clear and focused when this then gets handed over to the Town Manager and then ultimately to the Town Council and where ever else it may go.

Ms. McKinley said her nephew was walking around the property and commented about there the markers were placed.

There was discussion about the placement of trail markers and the direction the trail follows. There was also discussion about the placement of trail ribbons and different trails on the site.

Ms. Simone stated they are going to follow the trail that exists there and are not going to be creating any new trails as of right now.

The Commission talked about the area being used by ATVs.

Ms. Giddings asked if the area has been posted – in terms of the property being posted as town owned property and the posting of rules and
regulations. She said when the kiosk goes up the rules and regulations are posted right there – she suggested that that posting information that no motorized vehicles were permitted would discourage people from doing so.

Ms. Simone said there have been proposals in the past to try to get funds to do that but they haven't seen those funds.

There was discussion about signs posted on the site regarding the rules and regulations for the property.

Motion:

The Commission approves the proposed trail maintenance of the existing trail and requests that town agencies conduct maintenance to re-establish the trailhead.

Moved by Mr. DeFusco. Seconded by Mr. Sherman. Motion approved unanimously of those Commission members present.

Mr. Yale read the following motion into the record:

The Commission approves the proposed location of the crosswalk and parking lot area and dimension on town owned open space property, referenced by Assessor’s map no. 26. Lot no. 16, as shown on the site plan titled “Topographic Survey of Town of Cheshire, Topographic Sheet No. 16”, and requests that this area be established for public parking and access and that the same be referenced in the lease language for the subject parcel.

Moved by Mr. DeVylder. Seconded by Mr. Sherman. Motion approved unanimously of those Commission members present.

Mr. Sherman read the following motion into the record:

The Commission requests that the town pursue the required land use permits for the installation of 10 parking stalls and crosswalk on the town owned open space property referenced by Assessor’s map no. 26. Lot no. 16, as shown on the site plan titled “Topographic Survey of Town of Cheshire, Topographic Sheet No. 16”.

Moved by Mr. Sherman. Seconded by Mr. DeVylder. Motion approved unanimously of those Commission members present.

Mr. DeVylder suggested a motion to make sure the property lease include language to reserve a quarter acre of land for the parking area.
Ms. Simone informed the Commission that the language to reserve a portion of land for parking is in the property lease.

Ms. Simone said about a half and acre would need to be set aside – 2,520 square feet of parking area is needed; she stated that language to reserve that area is already in the new lease but it is not done by square footage.

There was discussion about the lease including language to reserve the correct amount of footage for the parking area; this language is reference in the motion just approved “…requests that this area be established for public parking and access and that the same be referenced in the lease language for the subject parcel.”

3. Open Space Property Signage/Logo design

Ms. Simone said there was question at the last meeting about how much it would cost to have the individual signs made up or if the Town has the ability to make the signs in-house. She explained the Town does not have lettering that is small enough to make the signs.

Ms. Simone said to have the Town’s sign vendor make the signs based on the picture of the proposed signs (about a 12” to 15” diameter) – the cost would be $15 a piece and that is no fee to change the set-up or quantity.

Mr. Sherman asked if it was the Commission’s intention to have the signs made and start putting them up on the property.

Ms. Simone stated that the sign regulations dictate what can be put up.

The Commission talked about the off-site directional is not permitted but on the property is permitted. The Commission could decide what size sign they would like to see and if its going to be incorporated in the kiosk if that is going to make a difference in sizing or if its going to be the primary way to identify the properties.

Mr. DeFusco said this changes things – he said the whole reasoning behind the size and the design was to be visible to motorists throughout town indicating the location of the open spaces but if the signs are restrained to the properties themselves then they may want to try a different approach on design or maybe they don’t need them – maybe they just need the kiosks.

Mr. Yale said the signs in addition to the kiosks would have little benefit that he could see.
Ms. Simone stated to have the directional signs at intersections was the original discussion but the review of the sign regulations does not allow for that.

Mr. DeFusco asked if the Commission could attempt to have the current regulations amended.

Ms. Simone said if the Commission wanted to obtain a variance which a pass on these – that would be something that would need to go before the Zoning Board of Appeals and they are specific to a property so it would not be a policy wide change – it would have to be specific to a property – there would have to be a hardship and that hardship is usually based on topography or some other limiting factor – said that is how ZBA approaches things.

Ms. Simone talked about why someone would request a variance from ZBA – it’s to deal with physical constraints might be in the landscape that might prohibit development.

Mr. DeFusco asked what agency dictated signage along the roadways and how to go about getting a regulation change.

Ms. Simone said the Planning and Zoning regulations dictates signage along the roadways.

Ms. Simone said the only remedy would try to get a change in the regulations. She said the Commission would have to look at the existing regulations, look at which regulations you would want to change; and then the would have to be brought to the Town Manager to authorize a signature before it would be brought to the regulating agency.

Ms. Simone explained in more details regarding the steps that the Commission would have to follow regarding requesting a regulations change.

Mr. DeVylder gave the Commission a bit of the history about how the sign ordinance came into being – it was that people were putting signs on corner lots all over town.

There was discussion about the placement of the open space off-site directional signs and the regulations governing the restricted placement of the signs.
Mr. Sherman said maybe getting the signs is a lower priority then getting the kiosks up – maybe it would be nice to have the signs at a couple of end points on some of the properties or the boundaries of the particular properties.

Ms. Simone said right now they don’t have anything so that would be ideal; she said they also have the markers for conservation areas.

Ms. Simone said regarding the building of new kiosks - there was remaining money left over from the DEP grant and they allowed for the purchased of wood signs that have the names of the properties engraved; she said she would have to check but thought they were $65 a sign.

Ms. McKinley said that on the Lassen property she never used the trails because she did not know where the parking is so maybe if you don’t put the sign up on the kiosk but with an arrow to where the parking lot was.

Ms. Giddings said the parking is at the kiosk or at the barn; she noted the kiosk is not near the paved parking area.

There was discussion about the parking area at Lassen Farm property.

Mr. Yale said short of getting the sign requirements with the Town revamped they have no way of directing people to the properties.

Ms. Simone stated that was correct.

Mr. DeFusco said the Commission may want to consider beefing up their website with a map or visual to the location of the open space sites.

This item would be kept on the agenda under unfinished business.

4. Ten Mile Lowlands Kiosk

Ms. Simone said what was handed out were the specifications used for the construction of the other kiosks that the Town owns.

Tape change.

Mr. DeFusco asked about how much it would cost to have a boy scout build the kiosks and if the costs would fit in to the Commission’s budget.

Ms. Simone said she was not sure of the price for the materials but she thought it came to about $200 for each kiosk not including the Plexiglas.
The Commission agreed they should move ahead to get this kiosk project done.

Mr. DeVylder reviewed the kiosk construction plan. He suggested getting lumber prices to build the kiosk.

Ms. Simone said the last kiosk was built by the boy scouts but that she did not know where they purchased the materials. She agreed to look through the grant to see if there were any details on that. If the Commission would like she could send the specs out to local lumber yards to get an idea of how much it would cost to build a kiosk and then they could take it from there.

Ms. Simone agreed to get lumber estimates for the construction of three kiosks. She hoped to have the information available by the next meeting.

5. Mixville Hills Property Access-Preferred Easement

Ms. Simone said there was discussion at the last meeting about Mixville Hill access.

There was discussion about Ms. Giddings and a Town Council member contacting the property owner at 1673 Old Waterbury Road.

Ms. Simone said she wanted the Commission to see the information about the easement before the property owner was approached.

The detailed information regarding the property access was reviewed. The pictures show where they would be looking to access the property as well as the location of the wetlands and the topography of the site.

The Commission reviewed and discussed the property access location.

Ms. Simone stated that the proposed access was the least intrusive way to gain access on to the property. It would not require the cutting of any trees – it’s a pretty straight line to get out to town property.

Ms. Simone noted that if Ms. Giddings needed any further information before approach the property owner she could provide that.

Ms. Giddings said she would like to leave the information for the property owner and one copy for Town Councilman Andrew Falvey. She said she would see if she and Mr. Falvey could make arrangements to visit the property owner to discuss the proposal to gain access over the edge of
their property to access the town property. She asked about who would
maintain the trails access.

Ms. Simone stated the access is for pedestrian traffic for passive
recreation. She said as of now the property trail access would not require
much maintenance because it is a nice flat shaded area. She said as far as
maintaining the area that would have to be discussed with the property
owner.

Ms. Giddings asked to have it confirmed the access is for pedestrians only
and not for vehicles.

Ms. Simone stated that was correct.

The Commission reviewed the location of property access – the town’s
property and the privately owned property. If the property owner does not
allow for access to the town property then another access will have to be
considered.

Mr. DeFusco said if the access is approved they may want to post a sign to
the trail.

Ms. Simone said the sign could be posted on the town property on
Waterbury Road.

There was discussion about putting a kiosk at this location - it was noted
this location is not suitable for an information kiosk.

Ms. Giddings said she would let the Commission know if she could come
up with a date and time for her and Mr. Falvey to meet with the property
owner.

Ms. Simone said she would be available to meet with the property owner as
well.

6. Earth Day April 2011 Events

Ms. Simone shared the calendar of dates regarding Earth Day events.

Commission members reviewed the calendar. The Commission has one
confirmed program on April 20, 2011.

Ms. Simone said she had some other calls out to people who work at the
Connecticut Agricultural Station – they conduct free lectures – staff in
waiting to hear back to see if a lecture about “bat-chat” could be arranged and a program about butterflies.

Ms. Simone said May 11, 2011 is reserved as well – she said the April and May dates corresponded with the Environment Commission meeting nights.

Ms. Simone also said she made contact with the Mount Vernon Song Bird Sanctuary in Southington. She suggested members go to their website (http://www.therecoverywing.org/supportourmission.html). She said the sanctuary conduct programs where they give out information about bird rehabilitation and other information about birds. She said they charge $200 for the program lecture and with that they provide a lot of information to the public about birds.

Ms. Simone said there is also the state’s Stone Wall Initiative where they talk about the history and significance of stone walls and sometimes conduct field walks in a particular town or one on a particular property and will have lectures and fieldtrips for the public – she said the fee structure of this programs starts at $300.

Ms. Simone said in looking at the Commissions budget for programming – there is $350 in funds for program support.

Mr. DeFusco said that bird program sounds more interesting and might be accessible for kids.

Ms. Simone said she thought the song bird program was more geared towards adults but she would find out more information to see if the program could be geared towards kids.

The Commission agreed they liked the song bird program.

Motion: To budget $200 to hire Connecticut’s Migratory Songbirds Through Rehabilitation for the program to Reduction of Negative Impacts on Bird Scaping for Earth Day 2011.

Moved by Mr. DeFusco. Seconded by Mr. Sherman. Motion approved unanimously of those Commission members present.

Mr. DeFusco said he also asked a professor at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies about possibly conducting a lecture on Eco-System services. He would report back if he could confirm a date with the professor.
The Earth Day schedule of events was reviewed.

Ms. Simone said there is some flexibility for use of the rooms at the library to coordinate with guest lectures.

It was noted that once the program information was confirmed it would be sent to the Park’s Department for the parks bulletin.

This item would be discussed at the next meeting.

7. Staff Updates

Ms. Simone stated that staff updates were covered under unfinished business items.

Mr. Sherman said he did speak with the new editor of the *Cheshire Herald* and that the new editor John Rook would love to see do a meet and greet with any or all of the Commission members but not until after the Thanksgiving holiday.

Ms. Simone said that she did speak to the Town Manager about the Casertano project. She said it was likely that Public Works would be able to start doing some of the work prior to going forward and getting the Planning and Zoning approval for the parking lot because its two separate things. She said she did speak with the Town Manager that letters were sent out to the adjoining property owners to the Town property as well as they will be putting out a press release so people don’t get concerned when the see town vehicles on Marion Road, the cutting down of trees and the pulling out soil – the town does not want residents to think a building is going in.

There was discussion about also putting out information requesting volunteers for work parties and the timing of the work to clear a portion of the Casertano property access.

The Commission talked about when they might look to advertise for work parties and welcome to the Casertano property. The discussed an event of April 30, 2011 – this date was agreed upon for the event.

Ms. Simone agreed to draft wording to advertise the event.

Mr. DeVylder asked about the Blue Bird program.

Ms. Simone stated the program would be in the Spring – the program is in the works. She noted that Commission members are welcome to help with
the program. She confirmed the request to have the posts installed has been submitted to the Parks and Recreation Department.

IX. New Business

1. Naming of Town Owned Property Policy

Ms. Simone said there was an inquiry at the last meeting so she provided Commission members with the Town policy adopted regarding naming town properties.

The Commission discussed how to go about naming the Dime Saving Bank property. They reviewed the requirements for naming or renaming town properties.

Mr. DeFusco talked about having middle school children coming up with a name for the Dime Savings property. He suggested that students could research the property and find out about the history of the property and work on coming up with a name based on the properties historical significance.

There was discussion about contacting the middle school principal with information regarding the naming program.

Ms. Simone reviewed details of the property naming policy. She said that three individual proposals to name a property were needed and then sent to the Town Council requesting the naming of a property.

There was discussion about three separate written proposals be submitted to the Town Council. There was discussion about having three different school groups agreeing on one name and then submitting the name to the Town Council.

Mr. Yale said he thought students would take the naming project very seriously and it would also get information out to students about open space areas in Cheshire.

There was discussion about how to proceed with the naming project proposal. Teachers (middle school and high school) could work with students in writing letters to the Town Council – one name would be proposed for each property.

Ms. Giddings said since 8th graders have to make a CT Mastery test in March, part of which incorporates a persuasive essay, they might be able to use this idea for the essay.
This item would be discussed at the next meeting under unfinished business.

2. Open Space Management Plans

Commission members agreed to table this item until the December 8, 2010 meeting.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Yale called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Moved by Mr. DeVylde. Seconded by Mr. DeFusco. Motion approved unanimously of those Commission members present.

Respectfully submitted:

Carla Mills
Recording Secretary
Cheshire Environment Commission