I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Acting Chairman Robert DeVylder at 7:02 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Bill Sherman called the roll.

Members in attendance were Robert DeVylder, David DeFusco, Bill Sherman, and John Pepper.

Members not in attendance were Bonnie Mayer and Randy Yale.

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

III. Determination of Quorum

Mr. Sherman determined there were enough members present for a quorum.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the pledge of allegiance.

V. Acceptance of Minutes from the September 8, 2010 – Regular Meeting

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

Motion: To approve the minutes from the September 8, 2010 regular meeting with no corrections.

Mr. Sherman moved to adopt the minutes. Seconded by Mr. DeFusco. Motion approved unanimously of those Commission members present.

VI. Communications

There were no new communications.

VII. Calendar Events
1. Earth Day – Friday, April 22, 2011 (Park Bulletin listing deadline: January 10, 2011.

Ms. Simone said there was discussion at the last meeting that this item would remain on the agenda and that Commission members might come up with ideas to be able to be advertised for the January 10, 2011 bulletin deadline.

Ms. Simone said usually if there’s going to be speakers they try to book it six months in advance. She said some dates at the Cheshire Library have been reserved.

Ms. Simone stated they already have one confirming of a wildlife biologist who is going to come and speak on coyotes in Connecticut. She said they are looking to get other wildlife discussions as well – Fishers and possible Moose.

Mr. DeFusco said he could also try to get somebody from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies to come and talk about a relevant issue.

Ms. Simone said she would send dates out Commission members before the next meeting so that everyone can see what the reserved dates are.

Ms. Giddings suggested finding someone to speak about Bobcats.

There was a brief discussion about Bobcats spotted in a few areas in Cheshire.

This item would remain on the calendar section on the agenda; it could be listed as a discussion point. The reserved dates at the library would be emailed out to Commission members.

VIII. Unfinished Business

1. Tip of the Month

Mr. DeFusco said he was still working on the Tip of the Month.

2. Casertano Property
   a. Proposed Property Access and Train Maintenance

Ms. Simone stated that the latest update with this item is as it was left at the meeting; staff had gone out to the property with the Lieutenant from the Traffic Division and looked at an area possibly for parking on Town
property and they were going to be working to figure out where the site line is best for a crossing and possibly putting in a crosswalk.

Ms. Simone said there has been turnover in the Police Department and the people who were in the Traffic Division are no longer there so now there are new people at the Traffic Division; she said time is needed to get coordinated with the new staff and so the can get caught up to speed.

Ms. Simone said the plan is to meet on Monday, October 18, 2010 to go out and take a look at the site and get some finalized plans so that way there can be some presented to this Commission for November so then a letter can be forwarded to the Town Manager and Town Council so that when the lease comes up for that other portion that they could hopefully incorporate the parking.

Mr. DeVylde asked how many acres Mr. Arisco leased.

Ms. Simone said she did not recall off hand how many acres are on that section. She said it says in the very beginning of the management plan there are about 38 acres so Mr. Arisco probably has a lease on at least twenty five acres of that; the area right along the river is not up for the lease.

Mr. DeVylde said he did not see where it should be a problem to reserve a quarter acre for parking.

Ms. Simone said now also looking at the State Statutes in addition to the Town Council then working on the lease and allowing a portion then be for parking – the State Statutes require that this proposal would have to go through the Planning and Zoning Commission. It is something they would likely be able to act on in short term –possibly even that night but the State Statues are clear that when its open space property and there is proposal for any type of development whether its parking area or building or anything; if its open space it has to go through Planning and Zoning.

Ms. Simone said at the next meeting they will hopefully be in a much better place and they will know exactly where things are going to go and what the time frame will be.

Ms. Simone said the parking lot would be gravel. She said the statute is written in such a general way that if it wasn’t done it probably wouldn’t raise any red flags or any problems but what if it came to pass that they were supposed to go through and get the permit and they didn’t.

Ms. Simone explained that the Police Traffic Division report would give the exact location so that would be best to just get an idea of where the
exact crossing is going to be – they may dictate where the parking is
going to be and all that; and what level of material might need to be
brought in – all of that would need to be part of the Planning and Zoning
application.

There was discussion about the timing of the Planning and Zoning and
the Town Council meetings. Planning and Zoning meets the second and
fourth Monday of the month.

Ms. Simone said there have not been any changes to any of the trail
layout when they had gone out there and walked because they do not
know where the crossing is going to be.

Mr. DeVylder said once they know where the crossing is they could maybe
get a brush-hog and open up a trail going in there. He suggested clearing
the area so you could walk through it.

Ms. Simone said Park and Recreation and the Public Works Department
would assist in cutting down some of the trees – it would not be cutting
down many trees at all as some of them in that area are dead trees. She
said the portion where there is thick underbrush is further onto the
property – to get onto the property initially there is no under brush its just
he trees dead or smaller diameter trees.

3. Logo Design

Mr. Pepper said the logo sample was presented last month and everybody
likes.

Ms. Simone said that a copy was submitted to her. She explained the first
step is Planning and Zoning because there are sign regulations. She said
she went over the proposal with the Planner that they would like to have
the signs put up on signs in town.

Ms. Simone stated that the Planner looked at the regulations and
unfortunately there is no regulation that allows it so.

Ms. Giddings asked if there was a regulation to prohibit.

Ms. Simone stated the regulations are written in a permissive way – that
you are allowed to such and such – if its not listed in the regulations then
its prohibited; she went on the say they looked through with a fine tooth
comb to see what it would fall under. She said there are exemptions to
the sign regulations and they have to do with warnings, with safety issues
as well as the public safety boards that go up – those are allowed by
exemption but there wasn’t anything that really fit as far as directional to municipal properties or to recreational areas.

Ms. Giddings asked about signs that are put up to places like Lock 12 or anything like that.

Ms. Simone said they are not covered under the regulations. She said there signs that are up but there illegal signs; she said off-site directional signs in the regulations there is a very narrow margin of what’s allowed and the majority of what is allowed is for agricultural stands and farms or growers.

It was asked if the Commission could get an exemption.

Ms. Simone said the Zoning Board of Appeals handles variances and that variances are based on hardships. She agreed to find out more about that for the next meeting.

Ms. Simone stated the sign is allowed on the property itself but not off sight leading to the property.

Mr. DeVylder talked about the placement of the directional signs near the Casertano property.

Ms. Simone said attaching the directional signs to stop signs or other signs or having independent signs to direct you is what was reviewed; certainly having a sign on the property is permitted.

Mr. Pepper asked about ordering the signs – he asked staff if she had word from the people who make the signs.

Ms. Simone said she did not get that far; she said there are facilities in the town to do that. She said she had a general conversation but will go back and get more detail about having the signs produced.

4. Staff Updates

Ms. Simone gave a staff update of the Mixville Hills property access. She said the Town Attorney did work out an easement agreement and it’s really geared to protect the interest of the town just initially so they have language to see what the town would be looking for in this type of arrangement.

Ms. Simone stated there were lengthy discussions on how it would be best to approach the property owner.
Ms. Simone said she was thinking of the best way to approach the property owner to initiate a conversation – either a letter or going out to the property.

Mr. DeFusco suggested having the representative of that district go out and talk to the property owner.

There was discussion regarding the council representative going out and talking to the property owner or have someone else on the council who knows the property owner go out and have a conversation.

The Commission and staff reviewed the map to identify the location of the proposed access – the proposed access is directly across from Darcy School so that people would be able to park at Darcy School and walk across the street.

There was discussion regarding the access to the trail and some possible issues relating to the access of the property.

Ms. Simone said further discussion were needed regarding the easements needed and other details still needed to be addressed; it was hopeful the property owner would allow the town to engage them in a conversation so they could go out to the property and go over what would work regarding access/easements.

Mr. DeVylder asked if there was language in place to guide the Commission. He asked if the Town Attorney had any objections to someone from the Commission talking to the property owner.

Ms. Simone stated yes just as far as protecting the town’s interests to they know what the Town Attorney would approve or not approve of so when they have discussions with the property owner they can what the town is going to do.

Ms. Simone said the Town Attorney did not give any formal opinion about a Commission member talking to the property owner – it was really just about remote attorneys contacting someone or having someone from the community or some who works for the town approach this person.

The Commission talked about who would be best to approach the property owner regarding the access.

Ms. Simone asked Ms. Giddings if the Commission should formally send a request to the district representative, or if as the council liaison Ms. Giddings would follow up on who would contact the property owner.
Ms. Giddings said she would run it by Andrew Falvey since it is in his district. She said maybe she and Andrew Falvey could go out and speak to the property owner.

Ms. Simone said she could provide Ms. Giddings a copy of the language to be informed about what permission the town is looking for; the access is for pedestrians and if possible, without destroying anything, to allow town equipment access the site if necessary.

Mr. DeVylder said what they are looking for is a non-invasive access to the property.

Ms. Simone said there were no marking in the field now to mark the site but they would have the area surveyed. Right now there are no accurate survey markers in place.

Ms. Giddings agreed to contact Mr. Falvey.

2. CL&P Grant

Ms. Simone stated that Mr. Sherman had sent staff information about a CL&P grant he had seen in the paper.

Ms. Simone passed out copies of the information regarding the grant. She explained that CL&P had a grant program with two deadlines per year – April 15 and October 15 and while the Commission may not be able to make the October 15 deadline they could apply for the April 15 grant.

Ms. Giddings said that the Friends of Boulder Knoll received a CL&P grant.

Ms. Simone said applying for the grant may be something the town can pursue for the next cycle.

Mr. DeVylder said maybe they could look into applying for the grant for the Ten Mile Lowland kiosks.

The grants are from $250 to $1000. The grants are for the purpose of environmental education.

Ms. Simone said that staff could prepare the grant submission but if Commission members have information they could work on it together. She said in looking at the grant application it looks like it is pretty straightforward.
Ms. Simone suggested adding this discussion for the next meeting under the Ten Mile Lowland kiosk item.

Ms. Simone said she did look up the information about the kiosks and how they came to be. She said they were through a DEP grant and roughly it started in 2004 that the town received the grant – roughly each of the four kiosks cost about $350 in materials and it was an Eagle Scout project.

Ms. Simone said looking at information for the management plan for this property is was written that this property would just be opened to the public for guided tours so if there was a project now to install a kiosk – she would recommend that that management plan be amended to reflect that so that way its consistent – if there is going to be a bulletin board that is more inviting and more identification in the field to attract people then the management plan would also reflect that.

Mr. DeVylder said that may stop some of the abuse of the property if the area was more organized – instead of just being a piece of vacant property where nobody has any idea of what it is or who owns it. Having a sign explaining what the property is and what isn’t permitted there would help.

Ms. Giddings asked if they could get a DEP grant.

Ms. Simone said the last two grant cycles for DEP that they had applied for had the grant funding pulled before the award process was complete. She said she was not sure if another grant was available.

IX. New Business

1. Ten Mile Lowland Kiosk

This item would be moved to unfinished business for the next meeting.

There was some discussion about the Dime Savings property.

Ms. Simone said her staff recommendation for the Dime Savings property would be to hold off putting identification until they can first secure private property easements to get on to the property as well as cleaning that property up as far as marking the trails to avoid people from getting lost; the site has 300 acres.

There was some discussion about the cleaning up of the Dime Savings property.
Mr. Pepper said he visited the site this weekend and to see what was going on – he said he went in behind IGA – he said it didn’t look bad and did not any real obvious dumping.

Ms. Simone said ATVs use that property and they have ripped up a lot of the area and terrain and some of the trails are very steep and are eroded and soil is going right into wetlands and its environmental a mess from that perspective. She said there are issues because it’s difficult to find your way on that property if you go off on the other trails – there is no map. She said there is a lot that needs to be done with this property.

Ms. Simone said the State donated some land and she hoped that area could become a parking lot and then they could have a trail head from there and avoid private property easements. She said there are still some issues with the deed and ownership of the donated property.

Mr. DeVylder said he thought the kiosks are vital to maintaining the property so people who care about the property will let someone know if they see something that shouldn’t be happening.

There was discussion about this project and some of the complications associated with the project. There was also talk about a possible renaming of the property and restrictions regarding the renaming of the property.

2. Fall Market Place Hike and Mailing List Sign-up

Mr. Sherman said there were several residents that signed up for hike (took place September 25) and to be placed on the mailing list at the Fall Market Place Environment Commission booth.

Ms. Simone said she has the lists – several people wanted to be on the mailing list.

Mr. Sherman said he took pictures at the Fall Market Place that he could share for ideas for next year’s booth set-up.

There was discussion about there being a new editor of the Cheshire Herald. It was suggested the Commission be introduced to the new editor to tell him about what the Commission does; it was suggested that a morning breakfast meeting be setup with the new editor with available Commission member and staff.

The next Environment Commission meeting will be held November 10, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.
IIX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:49 p.m. Moved by Mr. Pepper. Seconded by Mr. Sherman. Motion approved unanimously of those Commission members present.

Respectfully submitted:

Carla Mills
Recording Secretary
Cheshire Environment Commission