

MCC

Milford Conservation Commission Regular Meeting

Tuesday Apr. 16, 2012. 6:00 PM

Parsons Government Complex, Conference Room A, 70 West River Street, Milford, Ct. 06460

MINUTES

Mr. Poutray called the meeting to order at 6:10. **Mr. Johnson** introduced new recording secretary and city employee Meg Greene. He also welcomed scouts and leaders from Boy Scout Troop 12 (St. Agnes Church) who were attending toward earning their communications merit badges.

Members attending: William Poutray (ch), Claire Casey, Dan C. Drago, Steve Johnson, Maureen Mauro-Desantie, Oden Seaholm

Absent: William M. Blotney, Keith Dunn, Gerard Loiselle

Staff attending: Meg Greene (rec sec)

Public comment

None.

Previous meeting minutes

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the minutes from the March 19, 2013, meeting.

Old Business

ECO-COLLABORATION, FRIDAY, APRIL 5TH, 6-8

Mr. Johnson thanked Ms. Mauro-Desantie and Ms. Casey for organizing the Eco-Collaboration session, praising the strategy of organizing by watershed area because neighborhood connections were fostered for future efforts. **Ms. Casey** agreed that the event was a great success. **Ms. Mauro-Desantie** thanked Subway management for their exceptional generosity in providing space and food for the event. **Mr. Johnson** noted that teams interacted to define common goals for a variety of projects including recycling, and dealing with overpopulation of geese. He said all the group leaders did great job and that the watershed map in the city's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) provided a good framework for organizing groups in neighborhood watershed areas. **Mr. Johnson** also shared a comment from Commissioner Loiselle who at first didn't think this strategy made much sense to him. His experience at the meeting proved otherwise and he wanted to be sure that he felt it was a valuable way of focusing local community efforts. **Mr. Drago** commented that he learned about project leadership, roles and that the award presented to Subway for their ongoing support in the project has been displayed in a place of prominence with other awards. **Mr. Johnson** said he will share notes and contact information from the committee and small group meetings early next week after completing a round of grant applications that are due.

MILFORD LITTER CLEANUP CAMPAIGN—50K BY EARTH DAY (Months of April-May)

Mr. Poutray said the project was at 35% of goal with less than month to go. He said Spectrum Associates offered to adopt a spot and spent 2 hours collecting over 300lbs/1500 pieces of debris from Gulf Beach. He added that the group of employees emphasized how much camaraderie they shared and how good they felt about their efforts.

He noted that 18 volunteers from the New Haven Bird Club spent 4 hours behind the shopping plaza that abuts the important bird sanctuary area near the Indian River that feeds into Gulf Pond. They filled 27 contractor trash bags with 8,218 pieces of litter that included discarded 873 plastic bags. He said he plans a press release to update to media on the litter campaign's progress. He also commended Phyllis Swebilius who has routinely gone out to pick up litter every Sunday for many years.

He suggested reaching out to more groups, perhaps sending letters challenging groups to set and achieve a specific goal.

Mr. Johnson said he is trying to launch this type of effort through the Downtown Business Association. It was suggested that the campaign might direct renewed attention to the Milford Pride "adopt a spot" traffic islands.

MILFORD EARTH DAY, SATURDAY MAY 11TH –MCC-SPONSORED TABLE/EVENT

Ms. Casey said an MCC table will be positioned near the Earth Day registration area. She said she placed a decorated box with 50K by Earth Day volunteer sheets in the Children's Department of the library and that she will collect completed forms. **Ms. Casey** and **Ms. Mauro-Desantie** agreed that the Milford Earth Day posters were ready to distribute and noted that the billboard advertising looks great on I-95.

Mr. Johnson said a goal is to increase attendance, building on the approximately 300 people who attended last year. He noted that events are scheduled for Eisenhower, Mondo Ponds, The Berm, Gulf Beach, and Milford Point near the Audubon Center, including natural food preparation demonstrations by Two Coyotes Wilderness School, planting native plants and flowers near beaches, and invasive species removal. The First Congregational Church committed 25-50 volunteers for The Berm and **Mr. Poutray** said they should be asked to bring tools, if possible.

One of the Boy Scouts in attendance asked where The Berm is and was told it's an area near the Walnut Beach Pavilion/Silver Sands Beach Parking Lot containing 17 acres of woods designed to protect the area from flooding and wind from Long Island Sound. Invasive vines have done damage to it, overwhelming native trees and local conservationists are trying to reclaim it by clipping the lower part of vines.

WEPAWAUG RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE (WRWA)

Mr. Johnson said there have been 3 meetings and that the initiative received support from the mayor as well as the towns of Orange, Woodbridge, and Bethany. He detailed grant requirements tapping into funds from the National Fish and Wildlife's Long Island Sound Futures Fund. The Wepawaug Pond's Dredging Feasibility report by Fuss & O'Neill can be used toward the 25% matching requirement to win this grant. He felt confident that the application process could begin this year and noted that winners will be announced in October. He felt the application could provide a template for the whole watershed area and that Woodbridge has echoed many of Milford's concerns about erosion, flooding, fishing, and water quality. He noted another \$5000 seed funds grant from CT River's Alliance needs to be applied for. This could be used for the Watershed Alliance for start up efforts. Lori Romick, a member of the WRWA has been invaluable for her watershed alliance contacts and knowledge.

OPEN SPACE (OS) AND NATURAL RESOURCES AGENT PROJECTS: OPEN SPACE BASELINE INVENTORY

Mr. Johnson said the OS inventory tries to identify and document all open space areas throughout city's over 19,000 parcels. It was last done in 2002 when slightly less than 2500 acres were identified. The 2012 POCD wasn't able to confirm this information. Areas like Eisenhower Park and Mondo Ponds are zoned OS, but some parcels like Wilcox Park are not. Further alignment between OS and zoning regulations is needed, as well as research on whether such parcels are protected by deeds. He noted that The Berm has 17 acres zoned as OS but that they are not protected. He acknowledged the efforts of Steve Kraffmiller for the many hours he is spending in the City Clerk's office researching deeds and said a better update would be available soon.

OPEN SPACE (OS) AND NATURAL RESOURCES AGENT PROJECTS: INVASIVE EDUCATION DISPLAY MATERIALS

Mr. Johnson shared Oriental bittersweet specimens. He is arranging for a display from the CT Invasive Plants Working Group to be used at Milford Earth Day for "show and tell." He said that even small vines add great weight to trees as they wrap around branches, suffocate the tree, weaken it and eventually killing it. During storms, they add to the risk of the tree being pulled over or broken on top. He said Milford OS areas are being overrun by these plants as well as barberry, burning bush, Norway maple, English Ivy and others. He suggested providing "before and after" pictures of the infestations and noted that they will get worse. He suggested reaching out to Scouts troops for help in containing invasive species and consulting Master Gardeners for native alternatives.

OPEN SPACE (OS) AND NATURAL RESOURCES AGENT PROJECTS: GRANTS

Mr. Johnson said the Wepawaug is the main grant application being done now. **Mr. Poutray** said there's an opportunity to nominate local people and businesses for \$2500 Aquarion Water Company grant awards that they can donate to environmental organization of their choice. He said he is working on nominees. **Mr. Johnson** said an Iroquois grant will come due in May.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Poutray said the mission statement needs to be brought up-to-date, and that a subcommittee should be formed to lay the groundwork for shortened general commission review. He asked for volunteers.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MISSION WEBSITE

Mr. Poutray asked **Mr. Johnson** for comment. **Mr. Johnson** said a website developer was available to do the website *pro bono* and a site outside of city's website was planned, similar to Shelton's. **Mr. Johnson** got approval from the Mayor's office for this.

OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS

Return of the Osprey Party: the Audubon's primary fundraiser Saturday, 4/20, 5:30, \$40 per person, \$75; Silent auction.
Housatonic River Cleanup. Saturday, 4/27, 8am, with 5-6 towns participating for 7 years; volunteers meet at Stratford boat ramp. Milford DPW will donate dumpsters, boats take volunteers upriver, dropping them on islands not normally accessible for cleanup of debris. A similar effort was suggested for Charles Island.

Subway Service Day Invasive Clean-up at Mondo Ponds, 4/27, 9-1; volunteers will meet in Subway parking lot. **Mr. Drago** pointed out that Subway offers 4 choices of community service, which may affect turnout for Mondo Ponds.

Walnut Beach Cleanup, 5/4; 9-year-old MacKenzie Power's being expanded to Silver Sands

Milford Earth Day, 5/11—previously discussed

Rotary Eco Fest, 5/18 in pavilion at Fowler Field

Mondo Ponds CT Trails Hiking Day, 6/1; over a mile-long walk.

Mr. Johnson noted in a related idea that Mondo Ponds residents want to do work on the area, but getting city approvals for residential work on city property can be an obstacle. There's a possibility of creating a "Citizen Stewards/Rangers" program to be trained and operate with Inland Wetlands oversight following pre-approved and pre-permitted plans. An experienced trail manager has offered to help.

HYUNDAI RECOMMENDATION ON CONSERVATION RIGHT OF WAY

Mr. Johnson submitted a letter 3/20/13 to Planning and Zoning with the recommendation by the Conservation Commission that the plans for Hyundai include a conservation right of way easement providing off-street parking at the Beaverbrook reservoir.

New Business

It was moved, seconded and approved to add items to the agenda.

Mr. Johnson said the POCD advised adoption of a tax exemption (CT Statute PA490) to allow homeowners to designate portions of their property as OS in return for a tax exemption, similar to the treatment of farmland. Mr. Johnson advised that a committee from the Conservation Commission and the Mayor's Open Space Advisory Committee would need to work with Dan Thomas, the tax assessor, to establish the criteria needed for this program. Adoption of the PA-490 Open Space program would be subject to aldermanic approval. Clarification was needed on the mechanics of the program, and similar models in nearby communities will be studied.

Similarly, businesses can receive a 60% tax reduction for money dedicated to the city's Open Space fund. Mayor Blake has asked the commission to move on this. **Mr. Poutray** said a strategy is needed for approaching businesses, perhaps recruiting help from business groups like the green committee of the Chamber of Commerce to expedite networking.

Ms. Mauro-Desantie will talk to Dan German. (They are co-chairs).

Other

It was noted that **Mr. Blotney** had a business calendar conflict, and **Mr. Dunn** is farming. **Mr. Johnson** reported that **Mr. Loisele** regretted not attending the meeting, but was recovering from some minor surgery. There was a suggestion to invite McKenzie Power to the May meeting to recognize her clean-up efforts. Discussion moved to the idea of inviting a student representative to join MCC.

Adjournment was at 7:14.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Greene, Recording Secretary