

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of
The Conservation Commission – City of Milford
October 18, 2011**

- 1. Call to Order/Roll Call** – Carol Dunn, Kathy Kobishyn, Maureen Mauro, Oden Seaholm, Bill Poutray, Keith Dunn, Dan Drago, Bill Blotney and guest Steve Johnson from the Mayor's Open Space Advisory Committee.
- 2. Public Comment** – Steve discussed issues regarding ongoing destruction of trails and wetlands in the Solomon property (98 acre preserve owned by the City of Milford off West River Street). This property was purchased by the city and is designated in the original agreement to be preserved for passive recreation only. Steve showed recent photos of extensive damage to this property due to ATV use.

This past weekend Steve and members of the Mayor's Open Space Advisory Committee, and Conservation Commission walked the property along with mayoral candidates Bob Joy and Ben Blake to survey the damage. The following day members of MCC and MOSAC were joined by Lt. Rahn of the Milford Police Department. By state statute, no motorized vehicles such as ATV's, FWD's and dirt bikes are allowed to operate on municipal parklands. Several young people on ATV's were observed and did not stop when instructed to so do by Lt. Rahn. MPD followed up on that and on other complaints of similar activity that day.

Lt. Rahn said the police department would contact DPW about installing further concrete barriers to impede access particularly near the Avalon Bay property which has become an entry point to the park. It was also mentioned that there are ATV tracks onto the property from behind residences on Wolf Harbor Road. There is only a state ordinance concerning destruction of open space lands, particularly wetlands. Milford does not have a city ordinance regarding the use of ATV's in Milford parks. The Milford police department can hand out tickets only if they catch offenders in the act of violating the state statute and did so that same day. Lt. Rahn suggested developing a message to targeted neighborhoods regarding the state ordinance. Bill Blotney felt this type of message should be broadcast to the entire city. Right now there are only a few signs posted with the state ordinance. A suggestion was made to obtain more signs.

The following is a list of potential action items developed at the October Conservation Commission meeting:

- 1) Develop ways to identify those doing the damage
- 2) Notify the local newspapers about the problem
- 3) Look into the possibility of a city ordinance prohibiting ATV/FWD use on any public lands
- 4) Block access at entry points
- 5) Post additional signs informing about state ordinance
- 6) Notify state DEP about the wetlands damage and the need to enforce the state ordinance against destruction of wetlands

Solomon List (Cont'd)

- 7) Work with MPD to increase patrols especially on weekends, holidays and snow days when neighbors say activity is highest
- 8) Develop a city-wide program to manage trails on public lands
- 9) Encourage the public to use property for legitimate passive recreation
- 10) Involve Solomon Property neighbors
- 11) Notify city attorney of problems, particularly prevalence of hunting in city parkland
- 12) Confirm property lines
- 13) Possibly involve Citizen's Police Academy in surveilling the property
- 14) Keep Inland Wetlands informed
- 15) Public Meeting to discuss solutions
- 16) Inform alderman (in district)
- 17) Provide alternatives for ATV use

Maureen Mauro and Bill Blotney will both contact their alderman in the appropriate district to discuss producing a city ordinance to prohibit use of any motorized vehicle in city parklands, except parking areas. Steve Johnson said that the New Haven Register is currently working on a story regarding the Solomon situation. Kathy Kobishyn said she will speak to Judith Toohey regarding possible Citizen's Police Academy patrols. It was suggested that they might be able to coordinate patrols of the area as well as coordinate clean up efforts with the help of groups such as the boy scouts and girl scouts. Maureen will send Mary Rose Palumbo from Inland Wetlands the October minutes.

Steve Johnson also said it is important to confirm private property lines as opposed to open space through Milford MIS maps. A question was also raised about an existing abandoned house and garage on the property. It was suggested that the garage be torn down, allowing the parking lot to be expanded and the site more welcoming. This might encourage more hikers to use the property. As far as a public meeting is concerned, Bill Poutray felt this should wait until after the November election is held.

A suggestion was made to send a letter to the property management at Avalon notifying them of the misuse of the property. Bill Poutray felt a letter to Avalon would be most effective if issued by the city attorney if the CA's office deemed that appropriate. Bill also said he would work on a letter to the editor, but will wait until he hears back from Lt. Rahn about any further actions taken by MPD.

A suggestion was made that a good place for the police to monitor the area would be Matthewson school on the weekends.

Maureen asked if there are any alternatives such as a legal place for people use their dirt bikes and ATV's. Steve said there is one facility available, but he heard there is a two year waiting period.

Unfinished Business

- a) Plan of Conservation and Development – Nothing new to report.
- b) CACIWC – The annual meeting is scheduled for Saturday, November 12th. Bill Poutray encouraged all commission members to attend.
- c) Furniture Row – A correction was made to the name of the property next to Furniture Row. It is “Vorlon”. Bill Poutray thinks the clean up of this property would be a good newspaper story. Carol Dunn will speak to her contact at the DEP about that.
- d) 990 Naugatuck Avenue – Carol stopped by the recycling property. She did not enter the property. There is ongoing litigation with the city regarding permits. The recycling plant is operating on a limited basis.

New Business

- a) Agricultural Committee – Keith Dunn mentioned that Mary Treat of the Robert Treat farm received a letter from Letty Malone regarding the preservation of farms in Milford. Mary said she would like to see some language put into the Plan of Conservation and Development about farms and their rights. Keith will discuss issues further with Mary to see if she has any interest in having the Conservation Commission create an advisory committee for farmers. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.
- b) Kathy Kobishyn reported that the Garden Club is sponsoring an event with the DAR on February 14th to discuss farms in Milford.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berberich

Minutes not approved by the Commission