

**TOWN OF DURHAM**  
**Conservation Commission**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, August 11, 2015**  
**7:00 at the Durham Public Library**

**Members present:** Carl Dahlman, Jon Herzig, Rick Huntley, Bill LaFlamme, Lucy Meigs (7:15), Bob Melvin (7:05), Josh Miller, Bob Thody (7:18) and Bill Ward

**Call to Order/Roll Call:** Rick Huntley called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Amendments to Agenda/Approval of Agenda:** Rick Huntley wished to add Joe Greenbacker and mowing White's Farm to the agenda. Bill LaFlamme, seconded by Bill Ward to approve the August agenda as distributed with the addition of Joe Greenbacker regarding the mowing of White's Farm as the first item under Old and New Business, made a motion. Motion passed with one abstention by Bob Thody.

**Approval of July regular meeting minutes:** Bill LaFlamme, seconded by Josh Miller to approve the July 2015 regular meeting minutes as distributed, made a motion. Motion passed with abstentions by Bill Ward and Bob Thody.

**Payment of Bills:** Jon Herzig, seconded by Josh Miller to approve payment of \$26 to Pam Huntley for secretarial services, made a motion. Motion passed with abstentions by Rick Huntley and Bob Thody.

**Public Session:** none.

*Old and New Business*

**Mowing considerations on White's Farm – Joe Greenbacker:** There was discussion about the mowing of the fields and considerations for grassland bird habitat. Joe Greenbacker gave an overview of the history of mowing the fields. He has used portions of White's Farm for 20-25 years. In the past he mowed fields to the north and east of the brook. Tony Caltabiano mowed the fields south and west of the brook. When Tony Caltabiano stopped farming, Greenbackers cut all the fields until told otherwise. Then due to flooding of the area, it became less and less usable. He commented that since the work done on Allyn Brook, the fields are much drier and is promoting the growth of grass rather than cattails. In order for the mowing to fit into his feeding program, he would need to mow in July. The concerns about bird nesting is understandable, but delaying the cut until after August 15<sup>th</sup> would not be useful in his feeding program. He could manage with a mid-July cut, otherwise the Commission would have to pay someone to mow the area. Rick Huntley discussed other mowing strategies, a very early first cut and late second cut and different mowing patterns/techniques. Joe Greenbacker commented that mowing patterns don't work well for all sizes and shapes of fields. In addition, his mowing equipment doesn't work well with some mowing patterns. He noted that there are some trees and branches down near the stream since the June storm. He is unable to mow close to the dead tree line because of downed limbs. In addition, he is unable to mow close to the skating pond because it is too wet. Bob Melvin commented when he was Chair, two people brought it to the Commission's attention that White's Farm was habitat for grassland birds. At that time, DEP suggested that the grass be allowed to grow as long as possible. Bob suggests contacting DEEP and Audubon for input about the area. The Conservation Commission should keep the Agriculture Commission informed about the input from both groups. Fred Mastele from the Agriculture Commission commented that the Conservation Commission should look at the best way to utilize the property. The Conservation Commission will work on a plan over the next couple of months for mowing of the fields. Bill LaFlamme questioned as to whether all the activity on the property impacts the birds.

**Status of Deerfield Farm well issue/Possible joint meeting with Agriculture Commission:** Dick Porter and Fred Mastele were present from the Agriculture Commission. Rick Huntley reported that the Board of Selectman (BOS) are planning to move forward with a UV treatment system for the well. First they will need to get Board of Finance approval and then approval at a Town meeting. The funds would come from the reserve account for the property. Dick Porter attended the BOS meeting when it was discussed and confirmed the BOS plans to follow the recommendations from the well camera inspection. Discussion ensued. Bob Melvin, seconded by Bob Thody that the Commission supports the use of the reserve account for the installation of a UV treatment system for the water supply at Deerfield Farm, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Status/review of proposed open-space regulations revisions:** no update.

**Status of Review of Plan of C & D:** no update.

**Index of all open areas as mandated by the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-131a (b):** no update.

**Sign for Memorial Tree Grove:** The sign should have been delivered to the Town Garage today.

**Status of ERT Comprehensive Plan Request:** The field work is scheduled for the last week in August.

**Website Content for Conservation Commission:** Information about the hunting lottery is needed. Rick would like digitized versions of topographic maps available showing property boundaries of open space.

**MyTownTrails:** The Mountain Bike Trail has been added to the application, bringing the total to four.

[My Town Trails - Durham](#)

**Discussion of Management of Town Property on Guilford Road:** There are no conservation easements associated with the property. Discussion ensued. Bill Ward, seconded by Bob Thody state that the sense of the Conservation Commission is that management of the property on Guilford Road is not under the purview of the Conservation Commission since there are no conservation restrictions on the property, made a motion. Additional discussion ensued. Rick Huntley has suggested to the First Selectman that a property management committee could be formed to manage Town properties. Motion passed unanimously. The NRCS reviewed the property and made the following recommendations for the stream corridor: grading banks (create a gentler slope in areas of steep slope), riparian buffer (establish woody vegetation on both sides of stream), invasive species management (remove from riparian zone and monitor for newly established plants and remove), ford crossing (if crossing the drainage swale is necessary for management, install a crossing) and field management (agricultural production is recommended). It is the consensus of the Conservation Commission to support the NRCS recommendations. It is also the consensus of the Conservation Commission for the Agriculture Commission to manage the property if it is to be used for agricultural purposes.

#### **Property Steward Reports/Parcel Status Updates**

- Whites Farm – Jack Stahl: Bob Melvin noted that the split rail fence needs repair. Rick Huntley stated that a replacement tree (American Hornbeam) for Bob White needs to be purchased, in addition to trees for Dorothy and Leo Willett. Rick Huntley, seconded by Bill LaFlamme to approve up to \$300 each for memorial trees for Bob White, Dorothy Willett and Leo Willett, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously. Bob Melvin will look into getting the trees.
- Pent Road/Parmelee Hill Road/David Road – Melynda Naples: was unable to attend this meeting. She will be submitting the educational activity report soon.
- Howd Road – Josh Miller: Josh Miller reported that Japanese knotweed needs to be mowed. He also reported that someone was using the field but parked in the road instead of using the parking area. The Commission will monitor the area to see if more people park on the road rather than in the lot.
- Pisgah Mountain and Chalker Brook Valley – Bill LaFlamme & Rick Huntley: Bob Thody stated that more parking spaces are needed. The parking area had seven cars when he was there a couple of weekends ago.
- Curtis Woodlands – Mark Smolley & Charles Ingold: Rick Huntley read Charles Ingold's report. There are a lot of trees down after the June storm, although someone has started to clear the trail. A temporary structure is located along the Town/Hoppe property line. The gap in the stone wall still exists. JC Farms is operating a temporary pumping system in Sawmill Brook as it passes through their property. No ATV activity noted. Sheehan Michael was present and stated that he has gone in to clear the trail. Jon Herzig asked if additional stewards should be sought for properties that are not routinely reported on. Sheehan was asked if he would like to be an additional steward for Curtis Woodlands. He agreed as long as he is still in town. Rick Huntley, seconded by Bill Ward to add Sheehan Michael as a co-steward for Curtis Woodlands property, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.
- Portion of Wimler Property with Public Access – Dick Porter: no issues.
- Sawmill Road – Ray Koba: no report.

**Report of Co-Chairmen:** Rick Huntley needs to find out if the trees identified for removal were cut. There was an issue with the original contractor for tree cutting. Rick distributed copies of *The Habitat* newsletter.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Huntley  
Recording Secretary

