

**CHESHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2011
TOWN HALL LUNCH/BREAK ROOM 115 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Members present: Randy Yale (Chairman), Jodee Heritage, Robert DeVylder, Daniel Grasso, Bill Sherman, and John Pepper.

Staff Liaison: Suzanne Simone.

I. Call to Order

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

II. Roll Call

Mr. Sherman called the roll. Members in attendance at tonight's meeting were Randy Yale (Chairman), Jodee Heritage, Robert DeVylder, Daniel Grasso, Bill Sherman, and John Pepper.

III. Determination of Quorum

There were enough members present for a quorum.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

All present receipt the pledge of allegiance.

V. Acceptance of Minutes from the Regular Meeting of September 14, 2011

Motion: To accept the minutes from the September 14, 2011 regular meeting.

Moved by Bill Sherman. Seconded by Jodee Heritage. Ms. Heritage noted that the correct spelling of her name was "Jodee" and not "Jodie"; correction noted.

Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

VI. Communications

1. The Habitat Newsletter, Fall 2011, Volume 23, Number 3

The Habitat newsletter was handed out to Commission members at tonight's meeting.

Ms. Simone said she would be attending the CACIWC meeting that will take place this Saturday, November 12, 2011. She would bring back any relevant information to the Commission at the next meeting.

2. Staff Memo: Casertano property parking proposal

This communication was reviewed and would be discussed under new business.

3. Staff Memo: Parking area, Marion Road, west

4. This communication was reviewed and would be discussed under new business.

5. Staff Memo: Parking area, Marion Road, east

This communication was reviewed and would be discussed under new business.

6. Staff Memo: Parking area; Marion Road, southwest

This communication was reviewed and would be discussed under new business.

7. Greenway Survey notification

This communication was reviewed. Ms. Simone said there was an organization that is looking for feedback from environmental/conservation commission members.

There was brief discussion on how to access the survey.

VII. Calendar – Events

1. Earth Day, April 22, 2012 (Sunday)

Mr. Yale informed Commission members Earth Day 2012 was coming up this April.

Mr. Yale asked Ms. Simone if there was a deadline as far as when they have to have the information in for the Parks bulletin.

Ms. Simone said to have anything listed in the Parks bulletin it needs to be scheduled by the end of December and then they would get the

press release together for the Parks Department for the end of December and they put it in their springtime bulletin.

Ms. Simone said they have found that often time's speakers get booked up early so they try to get them squared away in December.

Mr. Yale asked if the Commission had any feedback as far as what they would do this coming year.

Ms. Simone explained that they had a lot of attendees this year and people seemed to be very interested in it and they were asking for additional programs for the following year.

Ms. Simone said they have all of the contact information for the people that registered and attended for all of last year's programs so staff would do direct notification to them this year as well as doing regular public relations.

Ms. Heritage asked for some information regarding the Earth Day program.

Ms. Simone explained that last year's programs were held Tuesday and Wednesday nights at the library through April 2011; they had one program on coyotes, one program on bats, one on organic land care, one on butterflies, and one on native perennials.

Ms. Simone said the Environment Commission, the Planning Department and the Cheshire Library all work together to get some of the speakers. She said they also had the State Archeologist come and speak. She said the speakers that cost money most of them were paid through the library; the Environment Commission did pay for one last year – that was the song bird sanctuary speaker from in Southington.

Ms. Simone said they would have similar programs for 2012.

Ms. Simone said they did try to have something set up in October 2011 for a mini-series where they had three programs set up and no one signed up so they had to postpone that and then will likely ask those speakers to come in April 2012.

The Commission agreed to have staff move forward so the information could get out by December.

Ms. Simone asked if any Commission members had any suggestions of any individuals or any topic that might be of interest that she could research.

Mr. Yale said he thought a few years ago they had information about general wildlife in the Cheshire area; he said he thought they had some general photos up at the library of different things that were spotted around town.

Ms. Simone said that was something her office does – it's a spotlight and they would have photos up and give a brief narrative about the habitat and all of that.

Ms. Simone said at the CACIWC meeting on Saturday there will be a speaker on Fisher Cats. She said she hoped to attend that session and maybe get another speaker to add to the list.

Mr. Yale said Ms. Simone could move forward with the Earth Day event planning with the blessing of the Commission. He said they could talk about the plans when they meet in December.

Mr. Yale thanked Ms. Simone for her efforts.

VIII. Unfinished Business

1. Tip of the Month

Mr. Yale said he was going to follow up on the 'tip of the month'. He said he still did not have firm commitment from the Town Council on when they are going to start publicize the law they are proposing to limit people's sump pumps and how they can disburse them – he said he needed to confirm the details and then follow up with the Commission members.

2. Trailhead Kiosk

Mr. DeVyllder said he was waiting to hear about what was going on with this project.

Ms. Simone asked if this was something that needed to be left on the agenda since it is approved, they have the funds, and the supplies will be purchased; she said she and Mr. DeVyllder can coordinate what is going to happen with the kiosk construction. She asked if the Commission wanted to keep this item on the agenda.

Mr. DeVlyder said due to time constraints it's probably best to wait until next spring to build kiosk.

Ms. Simone said there is the ability to hold on to the material.

Ms. Simone said regarding the funds – she said it would be best to spend the funds now and store the materials in a sealed container where it's not going to be exposed to the elements.

Mr. DeVlyder asked about digging a hole for the installation of the kiosk without calling Call Before You Dig.

Ms. Simone said she thought it depends on where it will be located. She said maybe it would be the prudent thing to do is to contact Call Before You Dig – it is a free resource and would protect everyone involved.

Mr. DeVlyder said he had no idea about what underground utilize were at the site.

Ms. Simone said she didn't either so maybe it would be better to contact Call Before You Dig and have them tell the Commission what's out there.

Ms. Simone said this detail could be coordinated when it's time to install the kiosk.

Mr. Yale said he was okay with removing this item from the agenda especially since they will be putting the project off to the spring; he said if needed they could put it back on the agenda again in the spring.

Ms. Simone said the money is secure now – they will buy the resources and they will have them secured for the spring.

3. Open Space Property Signage/Logo design

Mr. Yale asked if there were any changes to report regarding the logo design.

Mr. Pepper reported that he had contacted a couple of sign vendors and he was waiting for relies regarding pricing for the signs.

IX. New Business

1. Potential Program: Earth Day 2012

This item was covered under the calendar section on the agenda.

2. Casertano Parking Plan Proposal

Commission members reviewed the memos from staff regarding the Casertano parking plan proposals for Marion Road.

Ms. Simone said if the Commission recalls there was discussion previously of having the parking area across the street from the location in the area where Mr. Arisco farms and it went to the Planning Committee – at that time it was proposed to be a 4,000+ SF area. She said the Planning Committee had concern about people crossing the street and the amount of material that needed to be brought in to help level off the area as well as the amount of parking spaces that were proposed.

Ms. Simone said staff worked to minimize the size and the scope of the project on that side of the street as well identifying two other potential areas for parking; one of which has issues as far as sight line – being on the west side of the street you have that curve coming south on Marion Road so staff tried to detail just in estimates how many trees would need to be cut down and then the third is the parking area off of the existing driveway which from the street appears to be a loop around for a private residence but the town actually according to town maps owns half of the driveway so it owns one of the loops.

Ms. Simone reviewed the memo reviewing the proposal for the Marion Road – west. She said its 2,750 SF and is located in the area where the stock pile is currently located.

Ms. Simone explained that this parking plan proposes the removal of that stock pile so there would be a lot of fill that would need to take place; there is a valley that would need to be filled in as well as all of those trees around that area cut. In addition to that the site plan does show looking north on Marion Road trees that would need to be cut and cleared to maintain the sight distance.

Ms. Simone stated that this proposal has not been reviewed by the Police Department; she said she did not know if they would find that this is a significant length of sightline distance for the speed and contours of this road but this is as far out that they can take it before it starts to curve off.

Ms. Simone said in summary this proposes five parking spaces – four that are standard, one that is handicap and that conforms to the Planning and Zoning parking regulations. There are about sixteen trees that need to be removed on the west side of Marion Road and in addition another fifteen mature trees and shrubs will need to be cleared to allow for the creation of that parking area for the relocation of the fill to the area in the back where the valley is; it's about 440 cubic yards of top soil that would need to be removed and graded with filling in the back area that would mean it would be about 150 cubic yards remainder that would have to be trucked off site.

Mr. Grasso was asked if this was something town crews could handle or something that would have to be contracted out.

Ms. Simone said she did not have an idea on that and she did not have a cost estimate – she said she thought getting a cost estimate would help dictate whose going to do it – it's a substantial amount of work and she thought it was likely the tree clearing could go to another business that does that kind of work.

Ms. Simone summarized the parking area on Marion Road east; the site is 2,750 SF and would have five parking spaces, four standards and one handicap; no tree clearing is proposed; this is in the area across the street from where Mr. Arisco leases the property from the town. This is the proposed parking area that has been reduced in size from the 4,500 SF which was previously drafted in January 2011 which went to the Planning Committee and was denied at that point.

Ms. Simone explained that this plan still calls for the installation of a crosswalk and the required signage. There will be grading and filling of approximately 400 cubic yards of clean fill which they might be able to take across the street so this plan doesn't take into account if they were to take from that stock pile across the street then there would be trees that would have to be removed to have to gain access to that stock pile.

Ms. Simone said there would be wood chips that would be put around the area to help stabilize the grade. If trees were cut across the street to gain the fill then it is likely they would be chipped right on site; additionally there would be gravel brought in at a depth of six inches.

Ms. Simone said so this is about half the parking spaces and maybe a third of the size of what was previously brought to the Commission and to the Planning Committee.

Ms. Simone explained that the last design is for Marion Road southwest. This is a slightly smaller parking lot – 2,500 SF; this has access off of the existing gravel driveway; there are large Hemlocks as you go up the driveway on the right hand side – those would remain.

Ms. Simone said the parking area is proposed in an area that is a low flat area where the trail head which is overgrown but does exist in that area; immediately in this area proposed to have the parking lot there area multiply invasive species in that area and their shrubs so it's not large canopy trees that need to be cut and removed.

Ms. Simone explained that she was able to get an estimate for mainly because the materials are really all that's needed here – they don't have to bring in fill or change the grade so the cost estimate is \$1,500 and again this is with 50 cubic yards of gravel at about 6 inches depth; she said she did ask if town staff would have the ability to do this and she was told they would most likely would and that they would like be able to get it done in a day.

Ms. Simone said both options one and two would require the creation of new trail to gain up to the existing trail.

The Commission discussed the proposed parking lot options.

Ms. Heritage asked why the first proposal is even on the table – taking down that many trees and the cost of a lot higher price tag then \$1,500.

Ms. Simone said this was designed to provide options – understanding that some options are better than others; when it went to the Planning Committee there was question of why weren't other areas looked at – like right across the street from the existing.

Mr. Sherman said the east side of Marion Road is not a good option because people would have to cross the busy, busy street – in his mind that option is the low end of the pole. He said he liked the idea of the big project of clearing right there because it would make the entrance to the place more visible to the people that come by but it's a big project; he said he liked the idea of using the existing driveway – getting to the existing trail head – it seems to be a whole lot easier to accomplish. He said he wished there was a little more parking space they could eke out of this at the beginning of the trail head – if they could somehow get a couple more spaces that would be nice.

Ms. Simone said she thought there was the ability to expand the parking in this currently proposed area of the southwest design – the

reason why she went with the five spaces was because she was asked the question from the Council of why so many spaces for the other and what method did she use to derive at coming to that – and since they don't do counters to know how many gain access to a property and at that time her comment was 'she didn't know anyone one who's been on this property except staff and Commission members and a volunteer event' so they were airing on the side of having less and see how it goes and if they need more add on.

Mr. Sherman said he liked the idea of having the proposed fence so that people would not drive on to the homeowner's property from that driveway. He said in his opinion it was a good idea and good that staff considered that.

Ms. Simone said the cost of that is not estimated in the \$1,500.

Mr. Pepper said it puts the entrance closer the stop sign so people would be going slower at this location; he said the parking lot would nicer in this location then a cleared area across the street.

Mr. DeVylder asked if the path has been cleared at all.

Ms. Simone stated yes but not in the area where they went out there a few years ago – she said further the trail they had the volunteer event this year and that part of the trail was worked on.

Mr. Yale said he agreed with Ms. Heritage that this is the only option that makes sense at this point. He said hopefully staff is right that 4-5 spaces are enough.

Mr. Pepper said one or two signs at the driveway people would catch on pretty quickly.

Ms. Simone said maybe they could have a triangular double-sided sign so one could see it coming south or north on Marion Road and have the sign placed right at that entrance way so you would be able to capture people's attention to know where to turn.

Mr. Yale commented about where the sign could be placed.

Ms. Simone said the sign would be on the property so you could put the sign on the property – the sign to direct people to the property would be an issue. She talked about the benefits of having a double-sided sign.

Mr. DeVylder commented about having a kiosk placed at this location.

Ms. Simone stated that after the Commission approves the proposed parking area it has to go back to the Town Council. She said she did not know the time frame would be to get this on their agenda but she would be in touch with the town manager regarding this project. She said it would be beneficial of Commission members were able to attend some of the Planning or Council meetings and talk about this project; she would notify members when this item would be on their agenda so they could plan to attend the meetings.

Commission members agreed that the southwest location would be the best location for the proposed parking area. There was comment made about the neighboring property owner having use to the existing driveway on this property.

Motion: That the Commission moves forward with the Marion Road southwest parking plan as proposed by staff.

Moved by John Pepper. Seconded by Dan Grasso. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

Ms. Simone said she would not send the proposal to the town manager and he would forward it to that Town Council to be placed on their agenda.

Mr. Pepper asked if staff could get a price cost for a fence in this area.

Mr. Yale said after the first of the year they could talk about appropriating funds for a kiosk in this location.

Ms. Simone said Eagle Scout Patrick Hedden is willing to assist to help with restoration or the trail and possibly installing a kiosk. She said the Parks Department will be working with Patrick Hedden on formal details for a trail restoration/enhancement project.

Ms. Simone agreed to provide cost estimate for a fence and a kiosk for this proposed parking area.

3. Mixville Hills Property

Ms. Simone informed the Commission that she contacted Andy Falvey – she said she informed him that she would be contacting the property owner on Waterbury Road to ask about gaining access on to their property to get access onto Mixville Hills property.

Ms. Simone said Mr. Falvey responded saying that he has grave concern about that because then it would be asking people to cross Waterbury Road – that they would park at Darcy School and then cross Waterbury Road.

Ms. Simone said so she hasn't yet contacted the property owner at Waterbury Road. She said she was wondering if the Commission wants her to move forward on that or if they would like her to look at things and see if there is any other access points from any other roads.

Mr. Yale asked staff to look at other options that could be considered for access for the property.

Ms. Simone agreed to look at other options for access that would not require crossing the street and report back to the Commission.

Ms. Simone did report she was on the De Dominicis property recently and there is some damage to the water crossing and there are downed trees from the recent storm events. She said she is talking with the Public Works Department regarding the damaged culverts and replace with crossings; she said she was also speaking with someone who provided information about what were good pedestrian and horse crossings to use.

Ms. Simone said she is working on getting a list of project together that could be provided to the Park and Recreation director – the projects could be given to interested Eagle Scouts looking for a project to work on (foot bridge project).

X. Adjournment

Mr. Yale called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Moved by Daniel Grasso. Seconded by John Pepper. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

Respectfully submitted by:

**Carla Mills
Environment Commission
Recording Secretary**