

**SPECIAL MEETING  
ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION  
THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2013  
TOWN HALL ROOM 115 AT 7:00 P.M.**

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**Members present: Bill Sherman, Robert DeVylder, Jodee Heritage, David Mercugliano and Carrie Collins were present. Matt Abdifar arrived at 7:15 p.m.**

**Member not present: N/A.**

**Staff Liaison: Suzanne Simone.**

**Other: Bill Voelker, Town Planner was present. Mr. Voelker informed the Commission that he came to the meeting to introduce himself to Commission members. Tim Slocum, Town Council Chairman joined the meeting at the end of new business number two.**

**I. Call to Order**

**Mr. Sherman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.**

**II. Roll Call**

**Ms. Heritage called the roll.**

**III. Determination of Quorum**

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

**Members in attendance were Bill Sherman, Robert DeVylder, Jodee Heritage, David Mercugliano and Carrie Collins. Matt Abdifar arrived late.**

**Commissioner Attendance Summary**

**Mr. Sherman stated that everyone who is here is here and the ones that said no were Daniel Grasso who indicated he would resign and Matt Abdifar stated he could attend but is absent (arrived at 7:15 p.m.).**

**IV. Pledge of Allegiance**

**All present recited the pledge of allegiance.**

**V. Acceptance of Minutes – Regular Meeting – April 10, 2013**

Mr. Sherman called for a motion to accept the minutes from the April 10, 2013 meeting with corrections.

Pg.11 under the motion change “five” to “four”; pg. 12 change “Time Savings” to “Dime Savings” and “compressive” to “comprehensive” pg. 13 paragraph two change “grant” to “plan”; pg. 16 last paragraph change “who” to how”; pg. 24 “probation” to “prohibitions”; pg. 25 under item three first paragraph add “to” after “explained”; pg. 26 third paragraph “have” to “had.

Moved by Ms. Heritage. Seconded by Ms. Collins. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

## VI. Communications

Mr. Sherman stated there were no communications for this meeting. He said he did want to remind the Commission that their next meeting is Wednesday, June 12, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

## VII. Calendar – Events

### 1. Connecticut Trails Day Weekend: Saturday, June 1, 2013

Mr. Sherman said the next item on the calendar of events is the Connecticut Trails Day Weekend which they will come back to under unfinished business.

Ms. Simone stated they can add the next public event. She said the calendar section is really just for upcoming environmental events throughout the state and country – she said the next one is National Public Lands Day in September so she can add that to the calendar.

Ms. Heritage asked if there was anything planned for that event in Cheshire.

Ms. Simone stated not so far. She agreed to provide the exact date of the National Public Lands Day at the next meeting.

## VIII. Unfinished Business

### 1. Moon Property Management Plan

Mr. Sherman said if the Commission recalls there was a fair amount of discussion on this at the last meeting and they wanted to move

**this item for some legal consultation and perhaps Ms. Simone can update the Commission on this.**

**Ms. Simone explained that she had a discussion with the town attorney and he has the information and he's reviewing it so he will back to the Commission on that.**

**Mr. Sherman said since we the Commission had that plan from a prior meeting they probably no longer actually need to act on it because of the time expiration.**

**Ms. Simone explained the Open Space Ordinance states that the Environment Commission will have 45 days to review the open space management finding – that's 45 days when there's a meeting scheduled so not when there's not a quorum – that's for Environment as well as Parks and Recreation Commission so after the last meeting that was 30 days and then 10 days after that – in the middle of May ran the 45 days. She said technically it's past the time period to come before the Commission for review.**

**Mr. Sherman said so we won't see that again but it will move on the Parks and Recreation folks.**

**Ms. Simone stated yes that was correct. She said if there were any major changes she'll notify the Commission.**

**A question was asked from someone present at the meeting – the question was not picked up on the tape.**

**Ms. Simone replied to the question stating that where the property has frontage along Cook Hill Road - the Horse Council put in a trail on public property without permission and it veers off onto private property.**

**2. Commission event: DeDominicis Hike; June 1**

**Mr. Sherman said the next item under unfinished business on the agenda the Commission event in connect with the Connecticut Trails Day Weekend.**

**Ms. Simone said the program came out from Connecticut Forest and Park Association – its lists all of the statewide events and the Cheshire event is listed as well as there is a hike of Ives Farm by the Land Trust this year.**

Ms. Simone said she had some books listing the programs if Commission members wanted to take a look. She said they do have this information listed on their website as well.

Ms. Simone informed the Commission that all of the events that were held at the library they've had over two hundred people attending the six events that they've held and at each of those events we have discussed this hike and handed out flyers and people have asked about it. She said so far they have two people signed up but that's not unusual that they don't get them signed up right away they sign up later. She also said they'll have a press release going out in *The Cheshire Herald*, *The Record Journal* and *The Republic American* next week so they anticipate that there will be more people signing up.

Ms. Simone stated that Mr. Sherman was listed as the contact person for that so be aware it's advertised as the Environment Commission hosting the hike she'll provide him with the information needed.

Ms. Collins asked if there were other modes of communication for the events.

Ms. Simone said they put it up on their website but the town does not have a Facebook account or anything like that it's really more a passive need to go to the town website to be able to see the information.

Ms. Collins asked if that was something they could propose to do something like that - she said a lot more people look online for information.

Ms. Simone said she thought that was something certainly that this Commission can bring forward to the town manager.

Ms. Collins said her thought was not just a town website but maybe like a Cheshire Environment Commission Facebook page just to provide regular information updates or like a Twitter. She said she was just asking to see if this was something that might be worthwhile looking into.

Ms. Simone said she was not aware of what other commissions do or don't do so that would be a question she would have to ask about.

Ms. Collins said she knew of a couple others that do have Facebook pages so maybe it might be good to look into for this group as well.

Mr. Sherman asked if this was something she could follow up with whether it is with Mr. Voelker or Ms. Simone or get other information on.

Ms. Collins stated yes and she'd find out what other commissions are doing and come back to this group with information. She said it would be good especially because a lot of the younger folks might want to get involved.

Mr. Sherman stated he thought Ms. Collins had a great idea.

Ms. Simone stated she would follow up with the contacts that Ms. Heritage provided - she'd send them the flyer – she said they talked about it last time and now would be a good time to send it out.

## IX. New Business

### 1. Cheshire Code of Ordinances: Environment

Mr. Sherman said for himself and for the new members he wanted to review what was in the Cheshire Code of Ordinances for the Environment Commission.

Matt Abdifar joined the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Ms. Simone pasted out the whole packet that has the latest meeting dates and has the ordinances contained inside there.

Mr. Sherman said he wanted to briefly mention the section C.d.2: page 21 – section 2-49 he said just as a starter we act as an advisory capacity to the town council and starting at section C later on in the year one of their jobs is to make a written report to the council or activities, findings, recommendations and so forth.

Mr. Sherman said so they'll kind of gleam that from the minutes – so for example what Ms. Collins suggested earlier are the kinds of great ideas that they'd love to percolate up get out there.

Mr. Sherman said in item E it kind of tells us what we can't do about giving orders to Ms. Simone for example but what they do – do from a practical standpoint is certainly make requests because we support what we do and we make recommendations.

Mr. Sherman said in item F section F - these are the things – the shalls and the nays and or course in items one through four are primarily dealing with open space and if you were to read minutes from the meetings a lot of the meetings over the past couple of years (at least the ones he’s been involved with) – a lot of the time and effort has been devoted to open space but that’s not our only sphere of influence as they can see in sub-paragraph five, six and seven – those are pretty broad topics so as you kind of are gaining experience think about a particular interest that you might have or something you might have a passion of and let him know and they can put it on the agenda and chat about it at a meeting – he said again it’s a pretty broad marching orders so to speak that they have.

Mr. Sherman said so again he just wanted to kind of walk through that with you all as a group so they were familiar with it.

## 2. Freedom of Information Policies and Procedures

Mr. Sherman said the next item is the Freedom of Information Policies and Procedures. He said again as sort of awareness for Commission members – he just wanted to make them all aware of a few points. He said some of you may or not have more experience with freedom of information but a couple of points are that the freedom of information requires us to of course have a meeting agenda and that the meeting agenda be posted ahead of time for the members of the public to see and of course for us to see and the results and benefits of that requirement are of course public notice, it gives us as members time to plan, gives staff time to plan for the topics that come up and one other result is that as much as they might otherwise like to we can’t really add items to the agenda while we’re here. He said if there was something new they have to put it on the agenda for a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Sherman said they should also be aware of the consequences if they fail some aspect of freedom of information. He said complaints could be filed by a member of the public and then that entails the staff and legal folks to research and respond to complaints and it takes time and of course tax payers’ dollars.

Mr. Sherman stated this was just some information he wanted to impart. He said they could probably go to a seminar a day long on freedom of information but again these are just a couple of procedural type things that he thought they would review.

Tim Slocum, Town Council Chairman joined the meeting.

### **3. Casertano Property Update**

**Ms. Simone said she just wanted to update the Commission that things are really moving at the Casertano property – the parking lot has been put in by the Public Works crew and as an interesting side note as they were preparing the site they unearthed two vehicles that were buried there – an old car and an old pickup truck.**

**Ms. Simone said so they have the parking lot pretty well set – they brought millings there to create the surface as well as Public Works crews putting in the split rail fence as of yesterday to separate the private property from the public access way.**

**Ms. Simone said from what she understood the Parks Department is aiming to go out there tomorrow weather pending to help clear the trail so that there will be a trail head that is easily accessible directly off of the parking lot.**

**Mr. Slocum asked if there was a marking at this location.**

**Ms. Simone said not yet but once the trail is accessible then they plan on putting the marker right on the corner there so people know where to park a vehicle to gain access to the trail. She stated everything is on the verge of getting all squared away.**

### **4. Open Space Management and Property Schedule**

**Mr. Sherman said just a bit of a background – our town manager has asked the town department staff to develop sort of an overall plan of attack on management and sort of a master plan to manage and maintain the wealth of town owned open space that we have and we're here kind of seeing a parcel here – we're improving a management plan but what he thought would be helpful now is for the Commission to kind of get an overview from Mr. Voelker of where that is and where they hope to go with it.**

**Mr. Sherman said it was his understanding to funding and maintenance across the broad spectrum or things as well as a plan of execution and then they have to think about how they could participate.**

Mr. Voelker said they should probably follow Ms. Simone on this one – he said they were very fortunate that they have someone with Ms. Simone’s skills and talent and has done a good job. He said what they are trying to do is work their agency into providing input, constructive criticism into developing open space areas which fortunately grow every year. He said when the Commission weighs in on something it carries significantly – that why they’re here; he said what they could do at the staff level is – he said Ms. Simone is primarily the one who crafts a bunch of this and then puts Park and Recreation and other agencies and brings the Commission inputs and forwards their recommendations to the council and the council looks up to the council looks up to them to be the final prioritization by the ones who write the checks...he said it’s going to very, very important for this Commission to be involved in formalizing these things and has a much more active approach to open space management.

Ms. Simone said that’s basically it – they have management plans – they have things on paper galore but how do you execute it in the field. She said as of right now they don’t have a structure of what Parks does, of what Public Works does and there’s no funding do any of these things so they’re asking departments of when they are available to work on things so this will help to put together a whole structure of who’s responsible for what .

Mr. Voelker said it will make it more effective as the Commission is more actively in this. He said professional staff and come and report the Commission’s needs and Ms. Simone does a great job saying here is a plan that the Commission is thinking about – submits the request and moves it on which is great because Ms. Simone does great work but really for the Commission – it’s their community – we work here but it’s your community and not that they (staff) are detached from it but they (Commission members) are volunteers – they are here to provide stewardship – they’re here to provide guidance and their agency is supported by the council for that very purpose so it matters to us very much if your actively involved – he said they need activity participation not just as an agency but as individuals whether it be by properties you drive by periodically and say wouldn’t it be nice if we could do more there or if you’re out walking the trail hopefully some of you are doing that and there are things that you notice and think more periodic attention should be paid to certain things – he said the town needs the Commission’s members to be out there in the field. He said although Ms. Simone does a great job – but this is your town – we need you (Commission

members) to actively participate in helping and he thought the council views their role the same way.

Ms. Heritage asked a question about timeline - more important times that maybe need our involvement a little more than others – for instance how does that revolve around the town council is putting together the budget – how do we advocate for decisions that they may be making when they are talking about spending money on open spaces or not spending money on everything – she said to her it would be helpful to just know when those pressure points are along the whole process because she said she had the feeling that there are times when they need us more involved than others – perhaps July and August isn't that time but maybe October and November is or maybe its January or February is when the budget is being put together – she didn't know but if they could give them a little bit more insight on that she thought it would be helpful in at least the way she processed the way the council works and how we (the Commission) interact with that.

Mr. Voelker said that staff is going to take a systematic approach to this as work around the budget cycle.

Mr. Slocum said this is only something recently developed as something recognized as important – the full council hasn't really had any opportunity to review all matters – he said what they would likely want to do is have something coming from staff percolating through to our Planning Committee of the town council and he would say simultaneous with the input from this Commission. He said what he's learned is that there are multiple parties involved in the maintenance of town owned open space properties – that would be a benefit – and almost never provides enough money – he said he was not aware of a line item in our budget for maintaining open spaces properties in the ways many of us in this room thing is important so we are really in the early layers of this but it's not something we should sit on for a whole lot of time – this really is the time to start with this now because we are beginning a new budget cycle now and also they have budget cycle in the summer as well.

Mr. Voelker said he knew the council members would like inputs from every group – they are really trying to formalize that process; he talked about budgeting considerations and what department could have line items to fund projects – and once a more formal process is in place they can look at how they did it last year and what they need to do next year – and some of the information comes from us and the Commission is very important to that process.

Mr. Slocum said he would say the same and it would also be a way for prioritizing projects and where some of the money should be spent.

Mr. Sherman said if they were able to get their feet on the street or on the trails periodically they could see where the needs were.

Ms. Heritage said besides from us discussing that information here amongst us will they be provided opportunity for us to sit with a sub-committee of the town council – would you see that moving forward.

Mr. Slocum said he thought so – he said there is also the Planning Committee and it may be necessary to have a joint meeting for liaisons so as this unfolds.

Ms. Heritage said she thought if they wanted input from us that might be something that should be included in the proposal so that discussions that we have here on our own get communicated back to town council members – and not necessarily here in a formal meeting.

Mr. Voelker said the message is much stronger when it comes through the agency then it does from staff.

Mr. Sherman said since this is kind of just the early stages – is there kind of a time table where they can kind of plan to pop that on an agenda.

Ms. Simone said she knew the town manager Michael Milone had indicated that he wants to get going on this soon and have it done within several months so this is something that they will plan on starting very soon.

Mr. Slocum said from his prospective as a council member he would be concerned about priorities and he thought those were the sorts of things that would come from this Commission and staff in ways that they would be better able to inform our process.

Ms. Heritage asked in the rational starts sooner rather than later and you are in the middle of planning for the capital budget –moving forward which she said she could imagine that things that perhaps they might want to have done would be good to included under some of those things. She asked if she was looking at this right to say that Ms. Simone would bring those items to us – they would take a look at

it and then they would respond to the town council or then they would respond to Ms. Simone and she would then respond to the town council – how do you see that working.

Mr. Slocum said he would see them working as a group based on staff input to develop strategies that they think are important and then come up with a means to finance them – he said they are sort of the finance department as far as he's concerned; the actual strategy and mechanism for getting things done will come through staff, council and this body – that's how he would see it.

Ms. Heritage said so if there's a wish list when would that wish list be put together and presented when.

Mr. Slocum said he thought the sooner the better so it gets them thinking and obviously has to be put together. He said there are things say for example Boulder Knoll – there are issues up there that concern the council members at different times – they would like to see this that and other things done. He talked about during the capital budget process there are opportunities for some of the monies to be allocated for smaller capital improvements or other things they can find monies for (on priorities) even after the budget has been established.

Mr. Mercugliano asked a question that was not picked up on the tape.

Mr. Voelker said it's very effective if a letter comes from the Commission signed by you as chairman that the Commission acts on – he said it's more effective to you (the Commission) to recommend action to the council and get things in the works.

There was discussion about the budget cycle and proposing project funding items.

## 5. Town GIS system

Mr. Sherman said the next item of business is the town's GIS (Geographic Information Systems) system and he just wanted to update the Commission by why of staff about the new mapping that is going online fairly soon.

Ms. Simone said so on the town website there's a link to GIS mapping and the mapping that's on there now shows aerial photographs from 2008 – the town recently had another fly over so

now the information will be much more updated then it was in 2008 and that will be going live relatively soon. She said she believes it will have all the same interface functions that they have now - that you can look up by address and you can look at abutters that touch the property boundary and things like that – it should be much more accurate that what is currently showing.

Ms. Simone stated that it's anticipated to be done relatively soon – in a couple of months.

Mr. Voelker comments on the effect whys the new system would be used (comments not clearly picked up on the tape).

Mr. Abdifar asked how the town anticipated using the system.

Mr. Voelker said to provide general information when people ask about a property – he said it's a very effective system; now they have to bring out layers of maps – it's a little easier to show on a computer screen – you can show if there wetlands on the property or not – you can show where houses - the area of the property – the shape of the property. He talked about the many uses of this tool including people who want to make inquiries who are interested in purchasing a property. He said there are a lot of things the system provides including what year a home was built and other property details.

Mr. Voelker said the public would have access to some of it but not all of it – the public will have limited ability to use the system but yes there will be some public access.

Ms. Heritage said she wanted to make a quick point aside of a maintenance item and upkeep of what they have right now – she said she thought they were missing a great opportunity for people looking to move to Cheshire as a marketing tool with the kinds spaces that we have – the open spaces and trails we have – she said would want to see web-cam video on the website showing the open space properties. She said she wanted to be able to show people out there what we have out there – she said in her opinion one out of twenty five people of the town really know the resources and properties that we have and to her that's a huge piece of this Commission is to how do we outreach to people and let them know what's available to them here.

There was discussion about whys in which the town could better decimate information on the town website and use communication and showcase the town's resources to the public and that there is

the ability to allow the public to know everything the town knows about resources available in the town.

Ms. Heritage said she thought it was a hidden jewel (the town's open space).

Mr. Sherman said as it was mentioned it was part of the broader scope of duties that we have as a Commission.

## 6. Building Safety

Mr. Sherman said the next topic is regarding building safety. He said he wanted to pass along some information from the town manager has given him from the town council chair - to make the Commission aware that the town is developing - they are planning to have one of the police officers - one or more educate and orientate members of the town staff as well as the town boards and commissions about building safety and they are proposing to be able to meet with the Commission as a group either at one of our meetings or maybe they might have another commission or two commissions join us at the same time and have a joint session or joint training orientation session about building safety and that sort of thing - details to be coming but he just wanted to make the Commission that that's in the development and in the works and they will hear more about that.

Mr. Voelker said that police department provided all town departments and employees have to watch a public building safety video that is useful. He said the town departments' staff has seen the video on building safety; boards and commission will be shown the video in the near future.

Mr. Sherman said we should all be aware of that (building safety information forth coming).

Mr. Abdifar asked if volunteers were needed for the Connecticut Trails Day.

Tape change.

Ms. Simone said so far there for the trails day there are two people signed up - but through the public events they had in the spring and they handed out over two hundred flyers and we're hopeful more people will sign up as the date gets closer; they'll put it in a few papers next week and it will also be on Cheshire Patch. She said it

was noted earlier that the town does not have a Facebook account – she said that was something the Ms. Collins was going to look into then report back.

Mr. Sherman said for those of us who are able to come out the event starts at 9:00 a.m. so be there at 8:45 a.m.

The Land Trust hike begins at 8:00 a.m.

Ms. Simone said the Commission is hosting the hike (staff will not be in attendance) – this is a Commission event.

The Commission discussed the plan for the Connecticut Trails Day event.

**X. Adjournment**

Mr. Sherman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Moved by Mr. Abdifar. Seconded by Mr. Mercugliano. Motion approved unanimously by Commission members present.

Respectfully submitted:

**Carla Mills  
Recording Secretary  
Cheshire Environment Commission**