

Parks and Natural Resources Committee

Tuesday, January 26, 2021 7:00 PM

**Special [Virtual] Meeting**

**Minutes**

**1. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM

**Roll Call:** Attending: Jim Morrow (Chair), Ken Feathers (secretary), Tom Harrington, Sue Harrington, Vicky Wetherell, Juliana Barrett, Charlotte Pyle, and, joining later, Quentin Kessel (Cons. Com. Rep.)

Secretary's note: The Town Website does not yet list Charlotte Pyle as a member.

Not present but on committee roster: Miranda Davis

Town Staff Present: Jennifer Kaufman

**2. Approval of Minutes**

A. The Minutes of the December 2, 2020 meeting were approved (moved S.Harrington, second T.Harrington (?))

**3. Opportunity for Public comment**

No members of the public were present.

**4. New Business**

**A. Spring Parks and Recreation Programming**

Committee Members were briefed by Town Staff on the programs scheduled for Spring, as described in the meeting package. Program participation opportunities will be variable, depending on COVID.

The following programs are anticipated, see the meeting package for additional details:

- Guided walk at Simpson Wood Preserve, on April 25; in celebration of Earth Week  
There will also be a short ceremony to officially open the Preserve.
- Improving your Gardens with Pollinators, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, offered as a virtual event;  
cobranded as Taste of Mansfield.
- Spring Migrant Bird Walk at Mt Hope Park, on May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Over in the [Morrow] Meadow, on June 3; as part of Connecticut Trails Day.  
A higher attendance limit is possible due to the spread out nature of the activities.
- Plein Air Painting in the Parks: biweekly April 22 through June 17 at five different parks.
- Mansfield Community Gardens will be available again this year;  
cobranded with Taste of Mansfield

**5. Old Business**

**A. Upcoming parks events**

Town staff briefed the committee on the status of winter activities. People are really eager to get outside, and when the availability of openings for the winter trees program was posted on the Community Center FaceBook page all 6 open slots were quickly filled

Winter programs, with details in the meeting package, are/were:

- Winter Trees of the Moss Sanctuary, on January 24
- Bats in the Night Sky, on February 12; scheduled as a virtual event
- Guided Hike/Snowshoe in Sawmill Brook/Wolf Rock Preserves, on February 28

And although Taste of Mansfield will not be conducting its usual winter event, a virtual event is planned.

**B. Parks Updates**

Town staff report that there is increased use of the parks by dog owners, and there have been some issues with not adhering to the requirement that dogs be leashed. There was one recent incident, just off

town property. There is a clear policy, but not a workable enforcement or policing approach.

### **C. Trails Website**

Town Staff report this is still proceeding, in coordination with Joshua's Trust. Some delays are due to the intern working on it now having a job.

## **6. Communications**

### **A. Staff Report**

Staff reported that there is a new communications staff member, and there is therefore better coordination. Staff reported that there is a lot of developer interest in the 4 Corners area, and while not required under the special zoning, there will likely be open space dedications as part of the developments. This would allow protection of significant wetlands, and also the opportunity to develop some recreational potential. Details will be developed in conjunction with the permitting process, and the committee should be able to have input.

## **7. Reports From Committee Members**

S. Harrington reported that there are some minor erosion areas on the Bicentennial Pond accessible trail, typically due to water not flowing through culverts.

S. Harrington reported that the bird atlas is continuing activity, with focused winter counts. She expects significant changes from the previous, 10 year old, atlas.

S. Harrington is working on a back page for the Town parks activity book and will circulate it when final.

There was considerable discussion regarding pollinator pathways, and the process to become listed. No properties are yet listed in town, and it may be that the Town needs to first initiate participation. S. Harrington and Jennifer Kaufman will coordinate with Ginny Walton to iron out the details. Jim Morrow suggested that we should also identify and list additional town parcels. The Harringtons reported that Merrow Meadow mowing was before the first frost, and while bees were still active, limiting further potential activity. Discussion of mowing management schedules for pollinators followed.

## **8. Executive session in accordance with CGS section 1200(6)(D)**

The committee entered executive session at 7:34 pm (moved T.Harrington, second Feathers)

The executive session ended at 7:37 pm

There were no motions resulting from executive session discussions.

## **9. Future Meetings**

The next meeting is expected to be the regularly scheduled March meeting.

Potential agenda topics were discussed:

- Review a map of the 4 Corners area to holistically look at the open space opportunities and potential, in preparation for input on individual development plans to ensure a coordinated result.
- Review Town parcels for pollinator pathway potential. It was suggested that committee members individually visit a few parcels each to get a sense of their potential in advance of the meeting.
- Charlotte Pyle suggested developing some education material for town staff on management of land for pollinators and invasive species.
- It may also be appropriate to update the mowing "prescriptions" to enhance pollinator use.

## **10. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 PM by consensus (moved Kessel, seconded Feathers)

Respectfully Submitted  
Ken Feathers, Secretary