

Open Space Preservation Committee
Parks Advisory Committee
Tuesday September 18, 2018 7:00 PM
Mansfield Town Hall Conference Room B

Minutes - DRAFT

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00

2. Roll Call

Attending: Jim Morrow (Chair), Ken Feathers (secretary), Quentin Kessel, Sue Harrington, Michael Soares, Heidi Groeger

Not present but on posted committee rosters: Vicky Wetherell, Tom Harrington, Roberta Coughlin, Julianna Barrett, William Thorne, Eric Apgar

Town Staff Present: Jennifer Kaufman

3. Review of Minutes

The Minutes of August 21, 2018 regular meeting were approved (moved Soars, second S. Harrington)

4. Opportunity for Public comment

No members of the public were present for comment; Rob Beach attended as a representative of Joshua's Trust, serving as the Steward of Whetten Woods, for the first item of New Business.

5. New Business

• *Whetten Woods Forest Management Plan – Collaboration with Joshua's Trust*

The Joshua's Trust Whetten Woods property of about 36 acres abuts the town's 24 acres and 14 acres belonging to the Lutheran Church on Dog Lane, in addition to minor forested acreage associated with the E. O. Smith playing fields, making up a total block of about 85 to 90 acres of protected land. Joshua's Trust recently developed in cooperation with UConn a management plan that is remarkably similar to that of the Town's property, recommending encouraging healthy forest and culling diseased and safety hazard trees, in addition to proactively managing ash threatened by emerald ash borer.

The committee and Mr. Beach discussed a proposal for the town to cooperate with Joshua's Trust to develop a unified forest management plan. With permission, Joshua's Trust can act on behalf of other land owners to apply for UDSA funding to cover 75 % of the cost to develop a detailed forest management plan, with the forester agreeing to defer billing for the remaining amount until resources are available from the sale of harvested wood. In discussion there was concern raised about preserving standing trees with cavities if they pose no risk, and this is indeed an element of the concept when trees are not near trails. Joshua's Trust was encouraged to contact the EO Smith forestry teacher. The group viewed this as a potential model for other abutting landowners to develop corporative forest management plans. .

The following motion was made by Kessel and seconded by S Harrington, and passed unanimously:

“The Open Space and Parks Advisory Committees shall write a letter to the Town Council encouraging that the Council:

- strongly support working together with Joshua's Trust in the management of the greater Whetten Woods Area (approximately 86 acres);

- support and cooperate with Joshua’s Trust in applying to the NRCS for a grant to develop a forest management plan for the area;
- coordinate with Joshua’s Trust in implementation of the Forest Management plan and subsequent invasive species management; and
- encourage public outreach on and education about the forest practices being implemented. “

6. Continuing business

- *Dog Park*

At the September 12 Council meeting there was a presentation to the Town Council by the proponents of creating a local dog park; committee members were urged to view the recorded meeting. The proponents are seeking to raise money and the council had concerns regarding the project. There was some discussion of the committee being charged with recommending property. The joint committee discussed this and concluded that the dog park proponents should make the case for a dog park and define space requirements before any action by the committee on review of land was appropriate.

- *CT DEEP Recreational Trails Program Grant – Due 10/31*

This is moving forward slowly pending a meeting with the Town branding consultant which will define how best to highlight existing town resources on the website, defining better what exactly should be included in the grant.

- *Simpson Family Property Next Steps*

A field trip date was established to review trail routes on September 28 at 8:30, meeting at the Mount Hope Park parking lot. Town staff will send notice.

- *Connecticut Bird Atlas*

Sue Harrington reported that observations were mostly completed for the first year, and there is shortly to be a meeting to delineate the next year’s activity. Sue is gaining experience with the data storage and retrieval system and will be entering data for most town open space properties. This will allow them to be identified as “hot spots” and will encourage other birders to also enter data.

7. Executive session in accordance with CGS section 1200(6)(D)

There were no items to bring to executive session

8. Communications

Communications were noted as listed on the agenda.

There are several items of interest on the agenda for the September 24 Town Council Meeting:

- Hanks Hill Road Open Space
- Parks and Natural Resource Committee merger

The final date for the Joint Committee Meeting on Sustainable Connecticut is November 1 at 6 PM

9. Other

No specific topics raised.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 (move Kessel; second S. Harrington)

Respectively Submitted
Ken Feathers, Secretary