

Branford Conservation and Environment Commission
P.O. Box 150
Branford Town Hall
Branford, Connecticut

SPECIAL MEETING

MINUTES

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2025

Branford Community Center, 30-48 Church St., 1ST Floor Conference Room

6:30 pm

or via Zoom with the link below if unable to attend.

Commissioners Present: Heather Wells Sweeney, Patrick Sweeney, Neil Goodlad,
Lauren Ruotolo, Carol Kaminsky, Karyl Lee Hall

Commissioners Absent: Karen Hannon, Joshua Greenberg , C. Day

H. Wells Sweeney introduced a guest (Ivy Kim) who is a co-chair of the Forest Commission as well as a Chair of the Conservation Committee of Branford Garden Club.

1. Guest: Ivy Kim, Co-Chair of Community Forest Commission and Chair of Conservation Committee of Branford Garden Club
 - A. Tree giveaway
Ivy spoke next and said she would speak first as co-chair of the Forest Commission. In January they had the idea of giving away trees and shrubs to the community. They looked around and found a source for small 1st and 2nd year tree seedlings. They approached the First Selectman about funding for this project and he suggested they come to this commission to see if they would be interested in funding this.
The commission asked her a few questions and discussed this briefly.
 - K. Hall made a motion to fund \$135.00 for tree seedlings for the Forest Commission.
 - P. Sweeney seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The commission asked Ivy a few questions and she reviewed the list of trees that she would purchase. She also said the seedlings would come with care instructions as well.

She then talked of the Branford Garden Club which she is associated with. She noted that there is some interest from them in finding out the work that we are doing with the Pollinator Pathway. She explained that they didn't want to put their addresses on a map online, but they did make a paper map and about 35 of the members agreed to be wildlife habitat gardeners. That group is trying to relaunch some version of the pollinator pathway. She was curious to hear what this commission thinks of a habitat gardening initiative in town.

H. Sweeney talked of the map online that shows the people who have registered with Pollinator Pathway. She also mentioned there is a Pollinator Pathway sign in the meadow at the Early Learning Center as well as a sign at their booth at the Festival.

The commissioners made some comments and had a brief discussion.

Ivy said the Garden Club is looking to participate in a limited way in their own yards but would like to be tied to the town program as well. She noted that their plant sale will be held on May 17 this year (location is pending).

N. Goodlad suggested that this information be used on our social media outlets.

B. Motivating residents to plant natives

H. Sweeney made a general statement that if anyone would like to work with the /garden Club on the Pollinator Pathway motivating residents to plant natives, that would be a fantastic thing to do

2. New Business:

A. November meeting date: Wed. Nov. 5 vs. Thursday Nov. 6

H. Sweeney said when the commission approved the meeting calendar, she read the incorrect date. She read November 6, but the correct date is actually November 5.

P. Sweeney made a motion to set November 5 as the correct meeting date.

N. Goodlad seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

B. Rodenticides and Neonicotinoids

H. Sweeney said she would talk of the Neonics first. The group had discussed this previously a bit. She referred to the CT Audubon magazine's latest issue which spoke of this issue. It highlights the trouble with neonic pesticides. Also, there is a bill pending now concerning these.

She asked the group for a volunteer to see if Branford uses either of these pesticides. If so, she suggested the commission develop an educational campaign to encourage residents to stop using them. There are other options that work as well that do not harm the birds.

The commission discussed this briefly.

L. Ruotolo volunteered to look into the town's use of pesticides.

She then spoke of a recent incident in Short Beach of a large rat poison spill on two different roads. It was reported to the PD and FD and they notified DEEP.

There is an ongoing investigation. She has heard no further info on this. She took photos, saying it was a very large spill. She said one of her neighbors wrote a letter to the Sound newspaper as well.

The commissioners asked her some questions and they discussed it at length.

Karyl Lee Hall encouraged the group to her late friend's website (Nancy Alderman). She was the prior head of Environment & Human Health and had a very long career dealing with pesticides. She will send the link to the group.

This will be continued and discussed at the next meeting.

P. Sweeney talked of two bills that are currently pending on this subject/ He suggested keeping the commissions efforts and publicity efforts around these issues in sync with the state level activities and try to coordinate the efforts. He then talked of Victor Demasi who is a longtime environmentalist in CT. He does speaking engagements as well. He will get ore info on that and report back.

- i. Town
- ii. Residents

L. Ruotolo spoke of her neighbor who did a showing of Doug Tallamy's speech on insects and the loss of them due to these poisons being used. Also, the importance of planting more natives. Perhaps an idea is to have that shown at the library in conjunction with Victor Demasi's talk

- iii. Legislative efforts

C. Forest Stewardship Plans

H. Sweeney reminded the group that they contracted to have a pilot program for these properties below. The contractor wrote up a draft plan. She met with the author, Zane from Conwood Forest along with other folks who are involved with Town properties. She mentioned the other people that were also present. They all reviewed the draft and made some suggestions. The author will finalize this and get back to the group soon.

Then, they will discuss the suggested action items and see what we want to take on to realize the stewardship goals.

- i. Hillside Avenue
- ii. Red Rock Road (Supply Ponds/Pisgah Brook)

D. Proposal by resident Eric Lepeak

H. Sweeney displayed her screen, which was the Ecology Restoration plan. She mentioned that N. Goodlad had sent her some comments .

The commission discussed this briefly.

H. Sweeney said she had a few suggestions of where he could help and reviewed them. She said she will set up a meeting with him to speak to some of the commission's concerns and express that the commission appreciates his enthusiasm.

3. Correspondence and Announcements

A. Clarice Begemann email re: rodenticides

H. Sweeney reviewed the email and noted that the commission did discuss this at length.

B. Larry Albert email re: vegetation cutting along Tabor Trail

H. Sweeney reviewed this email, and she replied to him that what she has seen is the cutting of mugwort, But Larry replied to her that he was referring to cutting of tree branches and seagrass. The commission talked about this, and they advised her to ask him the exact location that he is referring to. There is some confusion as to the location.

C. Email invitation for Community Service Fair at BHS February 14th 8:00-11:30 am

H. Sweeney noted this is an invitation to present volunteer opportunities for the students to complete their community service hours. She asked if anyone was available to attend. No one volunteered so she will reply to them to keep the commission in mind for next year.

D. Email from Branford Community Foundation re: Branford Volunteers website

This group has started a movement to connect service organizations with volunteers on their website. The invitation was asking for an email address that we would submit with a description of what we do . H. Sweeney suggested that

the commission create a new email to send when we respond to them.

- E. New Director of Parks and Rec is Dale Izzo
 - H. Sweeney announced that after Alex Paluzzi's retirement, the new director is now Dale Izzo. She may set up a meeting with her, she may be a good person to work with.
- F. CLCC Conference is Saturday, March 22nd. Early bird registration ends
- G. Sweeney said this is a great conference and she has learned a lot from her previous times attending this. She encouraged the other commission members to attend. P. Sweeney said tickets are \$110.00 each. She asked who would like to go?
 - P. Sweeney made a motion to send up to four commissioners to the conference.
 - K. Lee Hall seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

L. Ruotolo said she would attend.

4. Budget:

- A. Fiscal year 2024/25 - year to date
 - The budget was displayed and reviewed. There are still funds available to use. This will be reviewed at the next meeting.

5. Continuing Business:

- A. Permits for coastal projects- none
- B. Proposed developments and other building projects-Nothing new to discuss
- C. Invasive plant control
 - P. Sweeney said he and Lauren Brown will meet soon to discuss the (NPCC) Native Plan Protection Corp. They will talk about how to proceed in the upcoming season. They are thinking about getting more volunteers as well as their approach to the areas they have worked on. He added that this commission is welcome to attend the meeting. No date has been set yet for this.

D. Pollinator Pathway- Nothing additional was discussed.

E. Natural Resource Inventory

H. Sweeney will meet with L. Ruotolo again to talk about ways to get the word out that this document is complete.

F. Earth Day Fair: Annual Litter Pick Up

H.Sweeney said this year will be different than last year. We can have a table at the May 17th plant sale as previously discussed. The town wide cleanup day is another opportunity. She would like to do that, but she can't do it alone. In the past she has reached out to businesses to help. There are some businesses that have large parking lots that have trash that may blow elsewhere. Lauren added some thoughts, maybe involve neighborhood associations to help out. Possibly get some food or dinks donated as well.

H. Sweeney said Earth Day is Tuesday, April 22 . The weekend before is Easter so that weekend won't work for the town cleanup day. She asked the group if Saturday, April 26 would work?

She said the Farm River Coalition is looking to have a dance party at the end of May, maybe at the firehouse in short Beach and she doesn't think that date will work either. She will find out when a dumpster is available.

P. Sweeney suggested reaching out to other specific groups to help, scouting groups and businesses, and some of the volunteer groups in town. He suggested

setting a tentative date of April 26 and reach out to the groups to see the level of interest.

P.Sweeney made a motion to have an Earth Day cleanup on April 26 and that there is further discussion about the details and that a subcommittee be formed to work them out.

L.Ruotolo seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

G. Branford Festival- Already discussed.

H. Crabbing Bridge (Guilford) – No updates to discuss

I. Farm River coalition

H.Sweeney will share any details of the upcoming dance.

i. Upcoming presentations in March on water quality. Date TBD

She also said they received the grant from DEEP to remove the invasive water chestnuts in Pages Mill Pond in North Branford.

J. Communications and Engagement- Nothing was discussed.

N. Goodlad left the meeting .

6. Reports:

A. Select Committee for Open Space Acquisition- Nothing to discuss

B. Library books donations C.Kaminsky will have info next month.

C. Spill reports- Nothing to discuss

D. Contaminated sites - Nothing

E. Coastal Resiliency Plan- Nothing

F. Website- Nothing to discuss

7. Other:

A. Tweed Airport Expansion- Nothing new to discuss

8. Adjournment- The meeting ended at 9:14 pm