



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK
SELECTMEN'S OFFICE

RAY ALLEN, DIRECTOR PARKS & RECREATION
CARL P. FORTUNA JR., EX-OFFICIO, FIRST SELECTMAN
WILLIAM HOCHHOLZER, CT DEEP

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**CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
HYBRID MEETING**

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

9:00 A.M.

Old Saybrook Town Hall – First Floor Conference Room

Public Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/98156173166?pwd=NWdVdEd2aE5XR2kyc3JBWmZqa3R6Zz09>

Dial In: 929-436-2866

Meeting ID: 981 5617 3166

Passcode: 302302

One Tap Mobile: <tel://9294362866,,98156173166#>

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – All members present. Also present: Susan Esty and Kathy Connolly.
- II. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC** - none
- III. COMMENTS FROM THE AD HOC COMMITTEE** – Susan Esty asked about the GEI completion date for their study. Will Hochholzer responded that a good meeting was recently held and expects public review recommendations in January. Ms. Esty is concerned that the report may be in conflict with the Moorhead report and that trails could go in sensitive areas. Kathy Connolly commented that she felt the botanical report is not getting enough public attention and is concerned that the public review may not stress this enough. Will Hochholzer responded that appropriate public outreach to a generated list will occur including to NEMBA and the Audubon.
- IV. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE** – Mr. Fortuna commented on the funds still available from the sale of the Bokum Road home acquired with the Preserve and that perhaps this money could be used for a permanent trail from the parking lot to the trail system as well as the frog bridge. Will Hochholzer said we need (1) the preferred trail option from the parking lot to conduct a project plan review within DEEP and (2) that Alex is still holding lumber for construction of the frog bridge. Mr. Fortuna will contact DPW about construction of a culvert in the bridge area. Will Hochholzer further commented that state shields will be coming to the parking lot but that the town can put up its own sign too. Mr. Fortuna also brought up the recent West Hartford ATV ban. He will research further.
- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**- September 10, 2021
HOCHHOLZER/ALLEN
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Conservation Management Committee
Minutes
December 21, 2021

VI. BUSINESS BEFORE THE BOARD

A. Update on the Preserve Parking Lots: Route 153 and Ingham Hill Road parking lot and turnaround.

B. Preserve Forest Stewardship Plan Update

C. Update on the monitoring and control efforts for invasive weeds.

Ms. Connolly updated the group on the recent effort to control barberry, there will be herpetology walk on Earth Day.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS - Will Hochholzer asked about boundaries in the Preserve and the current status. Ms. Connolly stated that OS shields were put up 5-7 years ago but might now be covered by overgrowth. The Conservation Commission is willing to assist, as per Christine Picklo. Will Hochholzer stated that the new forester for the area, Alex Amendola, can coordinate with the committee and let them know how to help. The Beebe property and the 300 foot trail on their property connecting town trails was raised: Ms. Connolly will look for a form letter from CFPA to send to them about an access agreement. The letter from the ad hoc committee was brought up. Mr. Fortuna addressed the hunting concerns stating that it is allowed and has already been voted on by the committee. Will Hochholzer commented that the forest will need to be timbered to be resilient. Any decision to do so will be discussed but active management does need to occur.

Ms. Connolly stated that there may be a group of people who become plant conservation volunteers to assist with proper management of the forest. Will Hochholzer recommended that a scientific collector's application be submitted for the plant conservation work. Ms. Esty would like someone from the state to speak to the ad hoc committee about harvesting and hunting to assist with their understanding of this issue.

VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE – March 23, 2022

IX. ADJOURNMENT – Motion to adjourn at 9:52am

HOCHHOLZER/ALLEN

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Carl P. Fortuna, Jr., First Selectman

Date: December 2021

To: CMC Committee

From: Ad-Hoc Committee

RE: Preserve Uses

Dear CMC,

Over the past few years the Ad-Hoc committee has been asked to come up with possible uses within the Preserve to coincide with the Forest Management Plan being developed by GEI for the property. This study, as you know, has been long overdue and is hopefully reaching its completion. The Ad-Hoc Committee has formulated uses that we would like to see in the Preserve as well as several points that we feel should be addressed in the GEI study. These uses reflect our mission statement adopted on March 23rd 2017: *The mission of the Preserve's stewards is to protect and enhance the forest's diversity of regional native plant and animal life, it's cultural assets, safeguard it's ground and surface water and provide a range of educational opportunities and passive recreation for forest visitors.*

Uses within the Preserve:

The Ad-Hoc committee understands that there are many uses that should be addressed in the Preserve. Included in these uses are also safety concerns within the Preserve, as well as the addition and subtraction of trails. There should be a dynamic trail system that includes easy, moderate, and difficult trails. Trails should be multi use, as well as a few trails that can be single use. Uses that should be included are trail walking, trail running, mountain biking, equestrian use, ADA compliance trails, snow shoeing, dog walking, Geo Caching, Bird watching, guided educational walks, Bio blitzing. We believe the trails should include points of interest in the Preserve, i.e. ridge lines, historical spots, vistas, and the bog area. Trails also need to have safety zones for emergency situations. Trails should avoid sensitive habitat areas. There should be no motorized vehicles allowed. The current interim trail system has some very good destination points, but much of the blue trail needs to be moved to avoid vernal pools and low spots. The addition of several trails are much needed and would be welcome. New trails need to address connection points to Great Cedars East and West. New trails have been created with the last 3 years that we feel should be mapped and utilized. The entire eastern portion of the Preserve should be mapped as well for use. Within the trail system, marked and unmarked, there are several points that need bridges. Members of the committee have expressed the need for attractive bridges that give the user a destination to explore. Informational signs explaining different tree species and education historical signs should be added as well.

Two points that the Ad-Hoc group have expressed concern about, and some members feel should not happen in the Preserve, are hunting and the practice of active timbering within the Preserve. Hunting currently is not allowed on any town property and many members have many safety concerns as well. Timbering of the Preserve is a planned activity that has been expressed to the Ad-Hoc committee. Many members feel that this practice is not consistent with what the Preserve was purchased for. Large tracts of land to be cleared of trees will affect critical habitat, vernal pools, animals, and the peaceful nature of the Preserve.

We hope you consider our requests to make the Preserve a great destination for all to enjoy!

Sincerely

Ray Allen

Ad-Hoc Committee

Parks & Recreation Director