

MIDDLEFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

405 Main Street

Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the February 24, 2020 Special Meeting

Call to Order

Judi Rand called this Special Meeting of the Conservation Commission to order at 7:04 PM. Judi Rand and all seven members of the Commission were present: Thomas Capega, David Cekala, Jerry Finch, Robin Heath, Chris Hurlbert, Brian McDermott, and Steven Wolk. Also Barb Cabelus present to do the minutes.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Chris Hurlbert made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. The motion was seconded by Robin Heath and unanimously carried.

Public Comment

Public comment was heard from attendee Lenny Pinz on the general topic of hunting. He lives near the **King property** and is a frequent user of the property, often for dog walking and may

walk further up the mountain. He said he often runs into hunters and in tree stands on the adjoining land. Suggested if there is going to be hunting allowed on the property to post something at the entrance, like at the dog walking parking lot, notifying the public that hunters are on the property. He mentioned that all around the perimeter of the property (i.e. ¾ of the way up and to the top of the mountain) there are triangle signs designating adjoining property as Open Space and stating 'No Hunting'. Brian McDermott stated the King land was deeded to the Boy Scouts who maintain it, and no hunting is allowed. The game warden should be notified if anyone is seen hunting there.

Above the King property, North of Powder Ridge and due West of Lake Beseck, commission members generally agreed we should post No Hunting permitted. Judi Rand confirmed no hunting is allowed on King property per the deeded rights. It was advised if hunters were seen on these properties to call the game warden.

B) Lenny Pinz also discussed ATVs and Motorcycles overrunning the properties, not just on the trail, but through the woods, which is worse now than in previous years. They are coming in through the unlocked gate and go right through. Brian McDermott noted if the police go after offenders, it is the police's fault if they are chasing them and the offenders get hurt. By the time police arrive, the offenders/ATVs are usually long gone.

Brian suggested call State Police at Troop F, who will call the resident police.

As there are no license plates on the ATVs, Chris Hurlbert suggested if it can be found where the offenders live, then call the police. Offenders are coming from Meriden as well as Middlefield. It was suggested to put up more signs.

Election of Chairman

Chris Hurlbert volunteered to serve as Chairman. Robin Heath made a motion to elect Chris Hurlbert as Chairman of the Conservation Commission, seconded by Brian McDermott. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of 2020 Meeting Schedule

Brian McDermott made a motion to eliminate December meetings due to difficulty of obtaining a quorum during the holiday season; second by Jerry Finch, motion carried.

General discussion to decide in October if the November 23, 2020 meeting date should be kept or changed because it is a busy time. General agreement to review the November 23 meeting date at the October meeting.

Chris Hurlbert questioned how many make a quorum and suggested this should be checked. It was confirmed by Brian McDermott referencing the last meeting that with seven (7) members, a quorum is a minimum of four (4).

Robin Heath motioned to approve the 2020 meeting schedule (minus the December meeting), second by Chris Hurlbert. The motion was unanimously carried.

Discussion with Judi Rand regarding Hunting Permits

Judi Rand inquired about **issuing maps with hunting permits.**

Jerry Finch asked, who gives the okay for these permits? Brian McDermott stated the First Selectman gives the okay. Jerry continued, we've had past problems. Property has been closed down on Cedar Street. The property adjoining Sugarloaf property was sold to a new owner. A hunter was disrespectful to the new owner. The new owner then put up No Trespassing signs restricting access to the **Sugarloaf property**. Hunters need to remember hunting is a privilege, be polite and respect people's property. There is garbage all over the place at Sugarloaf where the hunting stands are, we are issuing these permits to people and not keeping track of what they are doing in the woods. **Do we issue a paper permit? Do you have to be a resident of the town to get a permit to hunt here?** Chris Hurlbert stated this is one of the things this commission needs to decide. More discussion followed about nonresidents and out-of-state hunters using various properties, such as Peckham over by the bridge. Brian stated McDermott you should have to be a town resident to get a hunting permit.

Judi Rand stated **for Strickland Farm on Cherry Hill you have to be a town resident for a hunting permit. But for properties purchased with federal funds or grants, you cannot restrict out of towners; only when it is purchased with town funds can you restrict people.** The woods area at Peckham Park and the park area are different; along the river is State Property, duct line west of River owned by Dotigney. Chris Hurlbert asked **how many permits do we give?**

Thomas Capega: There is State property out in the back along the river on the east side of the river, if you park at the bridge. Dotigney owns west of the river and has no problem with hunting there.

Chris Hurlbert: Can we get a list of all hunting areas we now have in town that we can look at one at a time and decide what we need to do?

Brian McDermott: Shotgun permits need to be looked at first. Various other questions were asked: What is too close to a house? What is deemed you can hunt on? What type of hunting is allowed on each property?

Judi Rand: School Street is deer and Fall turkey.

Brian McDermott: What properties do we give out permits for Turkey hunting? Those would be ones we would be concerned about first. Judi Rand replied we give out turkey permits for all of the properties.

Judi confirmed **you can bow all properties, can shotgun and muzzle load all properties except Sunrise Ridge and School Street.** Some confusion by members on what type of hunting is allowed on each property. Judi had prepared various maps to help define this.

Judi Rand noted that is why she started doing **pre-done forms** because lot numbers and map numbers were wrong on former permits; she reported the new forms were nearly done.

Chris Hurlbert asked if Judi could put together for our next meeting School Street and Strickland Farm/Cherry Hill so we have a map for each one, what we've permitted so far and what we are going to allow.

Judi said she has this put together and just needs to clean up what she's done so far.

Chris Hulbert said this would be perfect. Then we could look at each one, discuss it, and look at the map and set what we feel.

Brian McDermott noted for Strickland Farm, if you don't have written permission even though you might have a verbal okay to hunt on their property, but if you don't have written permission in your pocket, you are illegal. So on the map we have for Strickland Farm, we should draw that boundary on the map and if you want permission for this area you should go talk to them and get written permission." There is no property marker, so how would you know. Brian suggested people get the **Unex app (or other apps)** which shows boundaries of every property you are on.

Tom Capega asked, **What about Miller Rd.?** Is it being leased? There are posted signs. It is accessible if you have permission right where that bridge is. Do the owners have permission to put up signs?

Judi Rand stated the GIS maps are in process, but it will be another month before they are finalized. What we have now does not have the dimensions yet, and we need bridge coordinates also for each one. Judi requested help to put the maps together with coordinates and dimensions. Brian McDermott said we would need the bridge coordinates for each corner. She noted there are 5 different maps to view but not all of them show property lines, you have to overlay them. Brian McDermott suggested if the coordinates were on there and with the app on your phone you would have the coordinates so you would know if you are 500 ft. from the house. Put coordinates of the house into the app, say 500 ft., put that in and you can draw a line and know. Jerry Finch stated as a hunter you are supposed to know where your boundaries are. It is not up to the town to tell you.

Brian McDermott stated if someone gets a hunting violation on town property, they should lose their hunting permit. **Thomas Capega or Jerry Finch** stated the ones we should be concerned about are the guys sneaking into the woods. If there are boundaries on the maps but no numbers/coordinates people don't know where they are.

Judi asked, did you want to do signage-- hunting by permit only?

Judi Rand asked, "You know there are those **Rules and Regulations** we have you sign? About losing your privilege? So, for **Strickland Farm and Coe Hill properties**, maybe you can add that or modify those rules." Judi suggested **combining the permit and the rules and regulations onto one page** for each property (the permit on the top part of the page and the rules and regulations on the lower part of the page) so everything is on one piece of paper instead of multiple pages. This should make it easier to review each property and make any revisions.

Chris Hurlbert suggested making a **list of all the properties to review**. The list was compiled and is shown below:

- 1) Strickland Farm, Cherry Hill parking lot there
- 2) Strickland Road/Peckham Park
- 3) Coe Hill/School Street
- 4) Hubbard property and Brookside to Zygo property
- 5) Cedar Street/Sugar loaf
- 6) Sunrise Ridge/Spring Street
- 7) King Property - no hunting
- 8) Sand Pit off of Stowe Street (Schmaltz farm)

Chris Hurlbert also **requested packets be made of the maps for each hunting area** for each member of the commission.

Judi Rand then brought up **signage for marking open space properties on Strickland Road above Peckham** where there is no hunting allowed. She noted there are currently plastic signs there that are broken. **Does the commission want to remake/redo the signs?** Jerry Finch offered to make up wooden signs.

Chris Hurlbert **asked if the Conservation Commission had a budget for anything, money for signage?**

Brian McDermott stated he had talked to Ed Bailey, and Ed advised Brian the Commission did not need a budget but would need to ask him for it and will get what we really need. Brian noted that to get a budget every year the amount would fluctuate. Judi noted the commission would also need to get a recorder for recording the meetings.

Judi Rand agreed she would get the list of properties together and send it out. Brian McDermott volunteered to work with Judi to get the maps set up, noting Unex or other apps will give the corner coordinates; Judi stated the GIS map does that too. The maps should be set up for review at next month's (March) meeting.

Judi Rand and Brian McDermott noted the Town would be adopting pretty much the same as the State's hunting rules and regulations (except dropping the 22 hunting for small game) so these also need to be updated.

New Business

Judi Rand to email Brian McDermott to set up a time to review the hunting property maps.

Judi Rand brought up the issue of people complaining about **shot gun shells being left on the properties**. It was generally discussed that while hunters should be picking up their empty shells, with automatic shells it is not always possible to see or find them amongst the leaves.

Jerry Finch said hunters can pick up their shells. Do you want to use this with our rules and regulations to include removing spent shells from the property?

Judi reported people have also complained of **deer carcasses being left on the property**. Commission members noted carcasses could be left by coyote, or if a deer gets clipped by a car on the road and makes it into the woods. Jerry Finch said he had heard rumor of someone who did leave a carcass on Sugarloaf. Hunters should not be leaving carcasses on the properties. Any complaints were thought to be coming largely from people walking dogs or hiking and not from hunters.

Judi Rand: Regarding the **Strickland Farm on Cherry Hill** because the number of hunters is **only limited to 15 people**, Judi raised the **question of having guests. Should the guest be counted as a person?** Members noted a hunting permit is issued in the name of a person, not a person and guests. Judi asked, People have wondered if a guest is allowed because of that tag I give them? Various **members agreed guests should not be allowed**. Adults hunting is considered another person. A person without a permit is not allowed to be there. If a game warden came in and the person did not have the written permission (permit/tag), they would be ticketed.

But a **Junior Hunter should be allowed to go the Town Hall and get a 1-2 day permit for that Junior Hunter to go with someone. They do this for one weekend before the season opens and only the kids (under a permitted adult's direct supervision) are allowed to go in there during this time**. A Junior hunter gets the 1-2 day permit to get a chance to learn about hunting before the season opens. They would not be interfering with the regular hunting season.

Judi Rand - **Strickland Farm/Cherry Hill - Middlefield residents only?** Not sure what is in the deed regarding restricting to 15 people. We need to determine if **non-resident tax payers are allowed to hunt here? General discussion agreed non-resident tax payers should be allowed to apply for a permit to hunt here, first come/first serve**.

Chris Hurlbert asked, **Why does Coe Hill, which has a lottery, not have a 'resident only' restriction?** Brian McDermott offered to go to the Town Hall and look into it this.

Brian McDermott asked, **When will we start accepting hunting permits? January 1st** (January 2nd was also suggested as the earliest date requests for permits will be accepted because January 1st is a holiday).

Chris Hurlbert mentioned **Rule #4 which prohibits hunting on Sunday**. At Peckham Park that is the only day only day deer hunters have any chance before the duck hunters come in (unless the water does not come up).

Judi Rand distributed **State of Connecticut, Connecticut Conservation Commission Handbook** to all members.

Judi also handed out to each member a brochure for **The Connecticut Land Conservation Conference coming up on Saturday, March 21, 2020, to be held at Wesleyan**. Any members wishing to attend should let Judi Rand know. The Town will pay for the conference registration. Judi Rand reminded members the Conservation Committee is not just for hunting, it is about

the properties and how they are utilized for the residents; this conference is a good opportunity to connect with people from other towns.

Brian McDermott **suggested the Conservation Commission needed to look at duck management, wood duck houses.** Jerry Finch said we have put out a couple wooden duck houses last year. And some plastic houses are out there. Thomas Capega suggested a project to put some wooden duck houses together. Brian McDermott stated these would require 1-inch rough cut lumber.

Judi to email Brian McDermott to set up time to meet to go over the property maps.

Thomas Capega discussed that for years there were never any No Trespassing signs by the bridges along the river, but now we are getting **more “No Trespassing” signs along properties on the river. Now the State which funds all the trout will not trespass and release trout there.** It is hurting our river through our town because there are now 2 or 3 sections posted No Trespassing. General discussion: **Cider Mill Rd**

. was mentioned as one location where the ‘No Trespassing’ signs have gone up; the owners thought people were littering, but it turned out the river had been up and carried the debris down river onto their property. The owners had stated they would not like to restrict fishing and apparently did not realize the State would no longer stock fish there because of the No Trespassing signs. Another member asked, Who owns the property that side of the River before Cahills (across from Peckham Park)? Discussion followed that Kowalski owns both sides of the river. The reasons those No Trespassing signs were posted is wood that had been cut and was being saved was taken. And dirt bikes cross there too at the shallow part of the river, so the owner posted that property.

Adjourn

Chris Hurlbert made a motion to adjourn this meeting of the Conservation Commission, second by Robin Heath, and unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM.