

## Columbia Conservation and Agriculture Commission

Regular Meeting Thursday, November 6, 2014

### Minutes **Draft**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Present: Members Paul Ramsey, Tom McGrath, Christopher McGrath, Ann Dunnack, Walt Tabor

Approval of Minutes: 10/2/2014 motion made by Tom McGrath, 2<sup>nd</sup> Paul Ramsey passed with 1 abstention from Walt

Audience of Citizens: Anthony Ortiz, Jonathan Luiz

#### 1. Old Business

##### 1.1 Town Agricultural Grant

- Jonathan Luiz gave an update on where the grant is in the process.
  - The Grant documents look good and he will bring it back to BOS at budget time between now and February 2015. The dollar amount he is considering is in the \$17-20k range
  - Clarification – the BOS did not formally reject the Tax Abatement option
  - The Grant Option would bring “good press” for Columbia for what we are doing for our farmers each year. Whereas the tax abatement or tax reduction option is only a 1 time event announcing that we are doing it.
  - Need to iron out how much public information is contained in the application process so that it is reasonable but not onerous.
  - Need to think more on the rules. Such as:
    - Is there any waiting time to reapply if you receive a grant
    - Can the grant be used in conjunction with other state/federal grants
    - Could solar be considered as an appropriate project
    - Is the grant given after the fact as reimbursement or is it given up front in whole or parts
    - Would the grant be split up to a number of farmers or just 1 big project for 1 farmer each year.

##### 1.2 Mono Pond Invasive Aquatic Plants

- Jonathan - -Needs to put line item in the budget for this prior to 2015/01.
- The BOS had mentioned they would like the Limnologist Dr Court who has worked on Columbia Lake to review the chemical application option and give his opinion. He met with Jonathan and thought that a draw down at Mono Pond might help but there would be a need for spending money to study flow in, flow out, depth etc.this meeting.
- Columbia has shared obligations with the State of CT on managing Mono Pond. The State is the Primary Manager and the Town of Columbia is the Cooperator.

- Jonathan checked with the state ( Graham Stevens ? ) to see if funds from the CT Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program Stewardship Account were available or if there was any other funds available for Mono pond and so far the answer is no.

### 1.3 Conservation Easement Monitoring

- Tom and Chris McGrath will try to start doing the easement monitoring in late November. Gail McGrath will be joining them. Tom will work with Linda Macdonald to get appropriate letters out, paperwork in hand, and identification badges produced.

### 1.4 Trail Maintenance

- Anne Dunnack reported that the Utley Hill trails were in good shape. She also noted that she was got 8-12 high school aged students as volunteers 1 hour a week for 6 weeks to help her with the Utley hill (Chris Czarnowski) trail. So far she has gotten 4 hours from them.
- Tom McGrath reported that the Island Woods trails and the Szegda Farm trails were in good shape. That the Szegda Farm new mower needed a wheel replaced and the riding mower had been broken but now was back up and running

## 2. New Business

### 1.1 Earth Day 2015 – April 22<sup>nd</sup> ?

- (No Action ) - Do something with samples and examples of the invasive species in Columbia Aquatic and other. Focus on how the migration of these plants will impact property and property values in Columbia.

### 1.2 Collaboration with Historical Society's April Program

- Columbia's historical society is interested in developing a program for April 2015 that would involve the CCAC participation. History of Agriculture in Columbia.
- Tom McGrath is discussing with Justin Holbrook about creating a subcommittee "Friends of Szegda Farm" so that donations could be collected to help with the improvements of Szegda Farm and with making permanent historical displays.
- Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Tom McGrath