

**Columbia Conservation and Agriculture  
Commission  
Regular Meeting  
Thursday, March 7, 2024 7:00 PM  
Conference Room**

**Draft Minutes**

**(Submitted by: Tom McGrath Secretary)**

- **Call to order:** 7pm
- **Roll Call:** Tom McGrath, Ann Dunnack, Chris Tolsdorf, Jason Arico, Susan Mitchell
- **Approval of Meeting Minutes 01-04-2024:** Motion made by Chris Tolsdorf, motion passed unanimously
- **Audience of Citizens:** None
- **New Business**
  - **Sustainable CT, <https://sustainablect.org/>:** Jason discussed a meeting he attended in February that discussed “equity” and the ability of towns to move from bronze, silver, gold status based on projects.
  - **Farm Brochure:** Susan discussed the plan for this to be more of a 5 by 8 postcard listing 13 +/- agricultural businesses/farms and their products and services. Printing and Mailing will take place later this year with coordinated posting to Columbia Views and Everything Columbia.
  - **Right to Farm Signs:** Tom is preparing a list of recommended locations that he will review with Mark Walter and then DPW will install. Tom will attempt to apply for a grant for this through Sustainable CT <https://sustainablect.org/funding>
  - **Trail Crew:** On Hold until new Rec. Director is in place
  - **Affordable Senior Housing:** PZC is reworking the regulations to be more general as “Affordable Housing”. It is difficult to have more densely packed affordable housing with dependence on septic and well.

- **Storm Drains:** Many culverts in Columbia are 50 years or more old and are rusting metal that will be washed away over time they need to be replaced. Storm Drains that lead into Columbia lake are monitored and in the future they may need to be upgraded with a filtering technology prior to water entering the lake
- **Old Business**
  - **Steward Reports:**
    - **Mint Brook** – new trail through Robinson piece to Mint Brook and loop around Mint Brook pond to be created soon with help from FOMPSP volunteers
    - **Szegda Farm** – in good shape. Another connecting trail loop is being created on the upper trail system
    - **Mono Pond State Park** – trails are in good shape
    - **Hop River Mills** – Ground Penetrating Radar presentation held on February 20<sup>th</sup> was well attended
    - **Agriculture Report** – see events below
- **Information/Announcements**
  - **Land for Good: Making Farmland Available:** Review how Town of Columbia leases land to farmers e.g. Szegda Farm
  - **CT NOFA Conference (Susan):** <https://ctnofa.org/> - Northeast Organic Farming Association of CT – Winter Conference Event will be held at ECSU on March 23, 2024
  - **Know Your Farmer: 3/9/2024 Windham Community Center -** <https://www.grownconnected.org/knowyourfarmerfair>
- **Other Business:**
  - **Porter School STEM night Wednesday May 1st 5:30-7:30** Contact Jennifer Andrews Kenney [Jandrews@hwporter.org](mailto:Jandrews@hwporter.org) - Theme Environmental Sustainability – CCAG, Open Space, FOMPSP should all participate
  - **Trails Day June 1, 2** – Friends of Mono Pond will be offering hikes on both days and Tom is working with Heartstone Winery to have farmers market type event but with conservation and agriculture organizations to table (e.g. CCAG, Open Space, FOMPSP, Joshua's Trust, Colchester land trust, Willimantic White Water partnership, Salmon River Watershed

Partnership

**Adjournment:** 8:10