

Columbia Open Space Committee
Regular Meeting
Thursday, April 18, 2024, 9:00 AM
Minutes (submitted by Tom McGrath)

Call to order: 9:03

Attendees: Ron Wikholm, Rob Hellstrom, Mark Walter, Ann Dunnack, Paul Zator, Paul Ramsey

Approval of Minutes: 03-21-2024 – Motion made by Paul, Seconded by Rob – passed unanimously

Audience of Citizens: Tom McGrath

Updates from Cally Guasti/Honor Lawler/Mike Repak

Going forward Ann Dunnack will be the point person for communication from Columbia both for the town and FOMPSP with TPL Cally Guasti. Cally will then be the contact and gate keeper with IMBA Mike Repak.

IMBA/State Plan:

Possible visit to Rockland Preserve in Madison CT - <https://www.madisonct.org/520/Rockland-Preserve>

It has a combination of biking, walking, hiking trails similar to plans for Mono Pond

Ride the East Event:

This is a an East Coast Greenway sponsored event on the Air Line Trail starting and ending at Jillson House in Willimantic. Windham Chamber of Commerce is also sponsoring. It is a fund raiser for the Trust for Public Land. There will be a stop on each of the bike rides at the Columbia Hunt Road boat launch area for Mono Pond where representatives from TPL and Friends of Mono Pond State Park will share the current status of the TPL/IMBA Mono Pond Master Plan project

Acquisition Update Camp Laurel:

There is a plan for Avalonia Land Conservancy – www.avalonia.org to purchase the property. They are based in Old Mystic CT. Avalonia works in the south east CT area and is of similar size as Joshua's Trust having protected 5,000 acres since the 1960's

Old Business

PZC/Open Space Set-Asides – No update

Route 66 property – No update

Anita Faye Ramm Conservation Land – No Update

Pine Street Parking – Rob Hellstrom will be looking at options for trail location with the neighbors over the next few weeks. Tom McGrath will participate as needed.

Hop River Trail Alliance – Ann Dunnack and Tom McGrath attended several meetings with HRTA. HRTA is working with the state with a state grant on installing standardized signage for the whole route. Some federal funds are now targeted for improvements to sections of the Hop River trail in Coventry and Columbia near Flanders road. Plans are for the Hop River Trail and East Coast Greenway to connect with the Cheney Mills Trail in Manchester providing access to downtown businesses.

12-Town Airline Trail Alliance – Ann Dunnack and Tom McGrath attended several meetings led by CTRCD.org. CTRCD received a grant recently to continue work on a master plan. Discussions are ongoing about having a parent Air Line Trail Alliance and then both a North and South Air Line Trail Alliance underneath. The mid point is Willimantic and Columbia would be in the South Air Line Trail Alliance. This structure north and south would better align with the CT DEEP districts that oversee these sections.

Hop River Preserve – Joan Hill is working on a plan for July/August with FOSA (Friends of the State Archeologist). The Columbia Historical Society Annual Meeting on April 26 at Yeomans Hall 6:00 will feature a presentation of the GPR report on Hop River Preserve

Salmon River Watershed Partnership – Ron Wikholm attended recent meeting and they are installing monitors for temperature and salinity for all the streams

FOMPSP activities – May 1 Porter School STEM night, June 1 and 2 trails day hikes, June 8 participating with East Coast Greenway event

CT ResourceConservation and Development ctrcd.org: - New Grant money in place to continue creating the Air Line Trail Alliance Management Plan. Ann Dunnack and Tom McGrath participated in kick off meeting.

CTDEEP Aquatic Invasive Species Grant application for Mono Pond: No update

New Business

CLCC Conference: Report from attendees: *Tabled until next meeting*

Trail Maintenance: Rec Park Trails: *Tabled until next meeting*

Executive Session: 10:00-10:08

Motion to support the acquisition of the property discussed in executive session – made by Ann Dunnack, seconded Paul Ramsey, passed unanimously

Adjournment: 10:10