

**Columbia Conservation and Agriculture Commission**

**Meeting Thursday, May 02, 2019, 7:00 PM**

**Minutes – Submitted by Tom McGrath - Secretary**

**Present: Ann Dunnack, Chris Tolsdorf, Chris McGrath, Tom McGrath**

**Call to order by Chairman Ann Dunnack at 7:00pm**

**Minutes of 03/07/2019 were approved 2-0, 2 abstentions**

**Old Business**

**Conservation Easement Monitoring – CCAG plans to start monitoring during Fall of 2019. Chris McGrath and Tom McGrath to share documents with CCAG from most recent monitoring efforts. Ann Dunnack to provide most recent list of properties in Columbia that have easements (supplied by the Zoning Enforcement Officer Constance Kisluk). Chris Tolsdorf recommended trying out smart phone app Eppicollect for monitoring.**

**( [http://nrca.uconn.edu/students-adults/docs/5\\_EpiCollect\\_ReferenceGuide.pdf](http://nrca.uconn.edu/students-adults/docs/5_EpiCollect_ReferenceGuide.pdf) ) Ann Dunnack will also reach out to Paula Stahl for new draft on monitoring notice to land owners**

**Trail Maintenance**

**Ann Dunnack said that with all the wet weather there has been need for upgrades and repairs to water bars on the Utley Hill trails. Chris Tolsdorf said there is some minor cleanup needed on the Mono Pond Trails. Tom McGrath said he will check Szegda Farm Trails and in the near future**

**New Business**

**Sustainable CT**

**Sustainable CT - provides opportunities for grant funding to help communities promote economic well-being and enhance equity, all while respecting the finite capacity of the natural environment. Grants are awarded based on a points system.**

**( <https://sustainablect.org/actions-certifications/actions/> )**

**CCAG reviewed the list of actions that garner points which in turn decide certifications. Columbia should be able to attain Bronze certification and then receive grants for additional sustainability improvements**

**Project/Event Ideas**

**CCAG – is considering sponsoring educational events related to Sustainable CT and Water Shed management later this year.**

**Columbia Views**

**In the current issue Joan Hill has written an article about the Oberlander property. In the next issue Ann Dunnack will be sharing an article about Harvest Grove Farm in Columbia ( <https://www.facebook.com/harvestgrovefarm/> )**

For the Fall issue Tom McGrath and Chris McGrath will provide an article on Conservation Easement monitoring (what, where, why, who)

**Andover Conservation Commission**

Meghan Lally of the CT DEEP, is a member of the Andover Conservation Commission. Ann Dunnack had an informal discussion with her about having a joint effort between Andover and Columbia Conservation Commissions on reviewing the watershed for Andover lake that lies primarily in Columbia. Tom McGrath also mentioned that he had had informal conversations with her regarding her CT DEEP water monitoring program expanding into Columbia ([www.ct.gov/deep/volunteerwatermonitoring](http://www.ct.gov/deep/volunteerwatermonitoring))

**Oberlander Management Plan**

Similar to the Town owned Szegda Farm property there will need to be an Oberlander property management plan. CCAG agreed to review the Szegda farm management plan as a guide for developing the OPM plan. CCAG felt that there was an immediate need to appoint a Steward for the Oberlander Property and unanimously agreed to appoint Chris McGrath to that role.

**Open Space Steward Report Form**

Ann Dunnack presented the form that Joshua's Trust used for property management. CCAG agreed to adopt the form with minor changes.

**Commissioners Comments**

**Conservation Easements on Town owned Properties**

There is an immediate need to make sure that the proper verbiage for a Conservation Easement be attached to the Oberlander Property deed and at the same time the same verbiage should be added to the town property that abuts the Utley Hill preserve.

**Merging of Committees and Commissions to better serve the Town**

The CCAG members unanimously agreed that the Szegda Farm Management Committee and the Environmental Advisory Committee should be merged into the CCAG as sub committees of CCAG and that when the Oberlander Property Management Committee is formed that it should also fall under the CCAG umbrella. This reorganization will allow the volunteers that serve on these committees to better serve the town and to benefit from the synergy of combining their efforts.

**Adjournment: 8:15**

**Next Meeting: 9/5, also there is an option for a special meeting 7/11 if needed**