

**Open Space Stewardship & Policies Work Group**  
**Wednesday, February 28, 2022**  
**3:30 PM- Via Zoom Video Conference**  
**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT**

**PRESENT:** Margery Winters and Susan Masino

**ALSO PRESENT:** Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation and Zoning Compliance Officer, Tom Hazel, Tom Fitzgerald, Management Specialist and Orlando Casiano, Parks Superintendent were also in attendance.

**Call to Order**

Ms. Winters called the meeting to order at 3:32 PM

**1. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the January 5, 2022 Open Space subcommittee workgroup meeting were tabled until the next meeting.

**2. Discussion on Open Space Rangers Program**

Mr. Levine, member of Ridgefield's Conservation Commission discussed their Open Space Rangers Program. He stated that the Rangers essentially act as the eyes for the Commission. They have about 50 rangers including families and Boy Scout troops, they have also had a 6<sup>th</sup> grade class act as rangers for the school year. The rangers are required to check in with the Commission four times a year with their findings. They are assigned a specific trail or open space. He stated Conservation has a walk book which lists all the open spaces and their borders. He stated they don't allow their rangers to use any equipment. He discussed the way they market their Rangers Program through brochures, their local newspaper and emails. He also discussed the way they show the Rangers they are a valuable asset through a welcoming packet, a parking pass, hat, and year end event. He discussed funding for trail clean-up and their annual appeal that is mailed to residents.

The work group discussed who would be responsible for the daily operations of the program and managing the correspondence. Ms. Masino suggested selecting one or two properties to use as a pilot for the program. She stated that a Scout Troop is ready to take on Belden Forest and she knows a few people who would be willing to take on Ethel Walker Woods.

Ms. Winters stated she liked the idea of having a brochure at the library and various places around Town regarding this program. Mr. Casiano stated they have a couple trail heads that would also be perfect to put brochures in. Ms. Winters stated they would look at the information provided by Mr. Levine and see how they could scale it down and work on getting volunteers to help run the program.

### **3. Discussion on Using an Intern to Make Open Space Website Updates**

Ms. Masino stated that she may have a couple students who are interested however, they are finalizing their summer plans. She asked if there was someone at Town Hall who would assist in providing a template. Mr. Hazel stated that they usually provide a pdf for the Town's intern to post or if items are outdated the intern would take stuff down. The intern would be the portal to the website for materials, it's just a matter of how they get those materials put together. Ms. Masino suggested that the easiest thing to do may be to assemble a list of things they think should be removed and then assemble a list of documents or links that should be added.

### **4. Oral Report on Ag Lease RFP Update**

Mr. Hazel reported that the RFPs have been posted. They have two up right now, one is for the Barn Door Hills parcel and the other is the Meadowood agricultural lands. The RFP questions are to be submitted by the end of the week and the response by Mr. Hazel is due by the 9<sup>th</sup>, the closing date for the applications is March 14<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hazel stated that if they can't find someone who wants to use all the acreage at Meadowood they may be able to split that. The Meadowood property was discussed further including possible trails. Mr. Hazel stated that right now he believes they are working on barn preservation grants.

Ms. Winters shared that she just attended a two day conference regarding ecological landscape and the usefulness of developing pollinator pathway buffers within the farmland. She stated it might be something in the future they want to include in their agricultural leases.

Ms. Masino shared that it is the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday year for Frederick Law Olmsted and he actually had a hand in planting some of the plants at the 1820 house, there are going to be a number of events in Hartford on April 9<sup>th</sup>, it is going to be a celebration of old growth forest.

### **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Heather Taylor  
Committee Clerk