

# WENONAH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes  
May 10, 2017

Chairman Scott Barnes called the Wenonah Environmental Commission to order at 7:30 in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act at the Jack C. Sheppard Sr. Community Center.

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Scott Barnes (Chair. / Planning Bd. Rep.)	X	
Sharon Ceravolo	X	
Maria Ceravolo		X
Bob Bevilacqua	X	
Rich Dilks (Sec.)	X	
Dave Kreck (V. Chair.)		X
Julie Ream	X	

**Associate Member Present:** Heidi Congalton

**Public Guests Present:** Bill Ceravolo

The minutes of the April 12 meeting were approved as amended: (Motion: Bevilacqua, Second: Ream, AIF)

## **Chairman's Report- Scott Barnes**

### **Review**

**WEC Bird Quest team May 6.** Scott and Rich reported the team consisted of Scott, Rich, Sharon, Dominec Lanciano and Mary Dougher. Despite cool and at times windy conditions the team identified 67 species (a team record) at Tall Pines and in the Wenonah Conservation area.

### **Near Term Projects**

**Mantua Creek Trail** Scott noted that the area where large trees were lost in recent storms is now filling in with thick understory vegetation, which may have to be trimmed back to keep the trail open. Julie brought up the concern of poison ivy along the trails and speculated ways to control it. She suggested a jell form of Roundup. Bill said the whole plant would have to be treated. There was general agreement that spraying of herbicides was unacceptable. Using a weed wacker would also spread the oils and be counterproductive. Bill said clipping it back or digging it out with a shovel could be done. Sharon said she would research any natural methods for poison ivy control.

**Eagle Project.** Dave reported by email that Jack Costantino's trail improvement project is set for Sat. May 13, but with rain likely it would be delayed until May 20. He said they have started to set up 4 x4's and the stone will be delivered Friday. Public Works will purchase additional wood and deliver it to Dave.

Dave also mentioned by email he has removed about 20 4x4's from the Lions' project site and delivered 5 to the Monongahela Brook Tr. for repairs there and moved the rest to the eagle project site. He also noted the boardwalk on the MCT island has been repaired. He reported another hole has opened up on MCT, downstream from Clay Hill. He also spoke with Public Works about getting dirt to the Garden Trail to fill in the hole from the fallen tree there.

**Beaver Activity.** Bob reported he installed the "Do Not Disturb Beaver Dam" sign on Eldridge TR. The pond is noticeably lower and it appears the dam was tampered with as water was flowing freely on the north side and has not yet been repaired by the beavers. There was

speculation the beavers might have moved to Comey's Lake or further upstream on the Monongahela Branch. Sharon noted many new bird species, such as a solitary sandpiper and kingfishers, have been attracted to the pond. It was also noted the beavers have taken out the small hemlock trees planted at Comey's Lake by Chuck.

### **Trail Maintenance.**

**Indian Trail.** Julie noted she did not see a lot of debris near where the homeowner has been cutting trees. She also noted a fallen tree on the trail needs to be cleared.

**Garden Trail.** Bob, Julie & Scott held a work party there on 4/25. The dirt to fill the hole was not yet delivered so they did some trimming, cleaned the pool and increased the water flow. The small sign there is now unreadable. Bob suggested we do another slightly larger and in stone. Scott will send him a photo of the sign as a model. Sharon reported Dan and Maria put up an owl box at the Garden Trail and another at Camels Back Run.

**Mantua Creek Trail.** Two trees near the RR tracks are down and need to be cleared.

**Break Back Run Trail.** Bill noted a section of trail on a steep ravine is eroding and asked if steps could be put there. It was agreed that was a good idea. Sharon also noted her friend, Pat Donnelley, was willing to do trail repairs on BBR Tr.

**Wenonah Lake.** Bob said he has replaced the Frank Eggert trail sign with one of heaver gauge, much less susceptible to bending by vandals. The beavers have recently felled a tree on the eastern portion of the loop trail.

**Camels Back Loop Trail.** Sharon suggested she Maria and Rich meet there soon to look into doing planting of native wildflowers there. Bob noted the bulkhead there was under repair and needs to be back filled.

Sharon reported that Maria said wood from the walkway area needs to be moved to the street for the borough to pick up. It was decided we would try to do that on Saturday, despite the prediction of rain. Sharon also said Pat Donnelley has offered to repair the trail rails on Monongahela Brook Tr.

Rich reported he was contacted by Karen Sweeney about a concern Tom Capaldi had at the 402 E. Cherry St property. Rich met Tom there. Tom was concerned about a couple of large dead tree in the conservation area near the back of the property that he felt were potential hazards. Another tree had recently fallen into the yard there. Rich explained the WEC does not conduct or fund tree removals. That would be a borough responsibility. Rich said the WEC would not object to the removal of the trees, but Tom would need to request that action from the borough, which is ultimately responsible.

Sharon said the Lions have requested the WEC 4<sup>th</sup> of July walk include the new walkway. The Commission agreed the walk will be on the Eldridge Trail and end at the tea house.

**Letter to Conservation Area Neighbors.** Sharon presented a revised draft of the letter she has done. It will include mention of the new ordinance and increased violation penalties. A complementary map of the conservation area will be included. It was decided the simplest way to get the letter out was to hand deliver to households that border conservation lands. We could divide these into sections and each take a section. Scott produced a tax map the shows those locations. It was noted the revised ordinance is not yet on the online borough code.

**Clean Communities Day.** It is scheduled for May 13 but with rain likely, it may be cancelled.

**Newsletter.** Scott said we will mention: 1. The new walkway. Sharon will forward a photo to Scott; 2. The letter to conservation area neighbors; 3. The effort to achieve certification under Sustainable Jersey program.

**Sustainable Jersey.** Sharon reported a green team has been formed (typically 5-7 members) including herself, Melissa Gillis, Neil Sheridan, Bill Kraus and Chris Walden assisting from the state. Garry Odenbrett will be contacted as well. The team is planning an info table at the Ice Cream Social May 15. Julie will get Sharon a poster copy of the beaver sign for that. Info on native plants and where to buy them will also be given out. An Rx drop off box is also planned as a team project All this gives us points towards certification which can make grant monies available.

**Annual Picnic.** It was noted the June 14 meeting will be the annual picnic at Wenonah Lake, starting at 6:30 P.M.

**WEC sponsored bench.** Scott reported Jennie McQuaide was concerned about the cost of \$300 for the concrete pad. Bob noted that was a fair price. The pads will be installed by professionals. The cost of our bench comes out to \$600.70. The engraving will cost an additional \$90.

**Conservation easements.** Scot noted the Eldridge Trail near the walkway crosses the Colman property and possibly the Zupko property. Establishing formal easements there would be to our advantage.

**Web site.** Julie inquired if we could update the Current Projects section. Scott said he would like to redo the entire web site sometime this year. The new design will be similar to the Tall Pines site.

**New Access Trail at W. Poplar.** Bob reported he created a new access trail just south of the ravine and running from the end of W. Poplar to Break Back Run Trail. A previous trail ( that is shown on our current map) accessed BBR Tr. just north of the ravine but has now become completely over grown. Bob placed cedar trail posts at both ends of the access trail. Our map will be updated to show this change.

**Access Trail at W. Buttonwood.** Sharon reported the Trail will start at Jefferson near the stone marker and connect to BBR Tr. Sharon said she will need to clear parts of the trail. This will keep hikers from accessing the trails by using a nearby resident's driveway.

**Planning Board.** Scott reported the board is proposing a zoning overlay to convert some of the larger old homes on Mantua Ave between Princeton and Monroe Aves. to commercial office and professional use. Sharon noted that if the Borough's Streetscape project uses environmentally sustainable elements, they could earn points towards Sustainable Jersey certification.

Heidi noted a large fallen tree at Wenonah Lake, straight back from the parking lot. It is high enough to walk under and appears stable. There will be no action to remove the tree at this time.

**Duckweed.** Rich reported the first of three billings from Princeton Hydro for treating Comey's Lake and Dilks Pond for duckweed and algae was received and forwarded to the borough for payment from our budget. Both ponds were treated on May 4. and are in good condition.

#### **Friends of Wenonah Trails Account.**

Expenses:

\$128.66 to Maria Ceravolo for reimbursement for materials.

\$358.49 to Bob Bevilacqua for reimbursement for materials.

**\$487.15- total expenses.**

Deposits: \$1.00 donation (found on a trail)

**Current balance: \$8,600.99**

MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:55 PM. (Motion: Bevilacqua, Second: Ream, AIF)

Minutes respectfully submitted,  
Rich Dilks, Sec.