

Franklin Agriculture and Conservation Commission

FRANKLIN TOWN HALL
7 Meetinghouse Hill Rd.
Franklin, Connecticut

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, February 21, 2019

7:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order: Chairperson Susan Allen called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

Members Present: Chairperson Susan Allen, Vice Chair Alan Holmberg, Gail Miller and Craig Staebner. **Alternate Member Present:** Roland Mihok. **Alternate Members Absent** Chester Rynaski. Mr. Mihok was seated as a voting member. Also present. Charlie Grant

2. Recognition of Visitors and Initial Inquiries: None.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. January 17, 2019:

MOTION #1 (2.21.19): made by Alan Holmberg SECONDED BY Craig Staebner that the Agriculture & Conservation Commission approves the Minutes of January 17, 2019 as amended: 1) New Business: "ADD" bald eagle count at 17 adults and 5 juveniles for a total of 22 birds.

VOICE VOTE: UNANIMOUS;

MOTION CARRIES

4. Call for Additional Agenda Items: None.

5. Correspondence: None

6. Old Business:

- a. **AG-CON PARTICIPATION BALD EAGLE COUNT:** Susan reviewed this topic and noted there was a newspaper article about Bald Eagle population in this area and activities happening at many nesting locations including Sprague. On August 9, 2007, the bald eagle was removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species. After nearly disappearing from most of the United States decades ago, the bald eagle is now flourishing across the nation and no longer needs the protection of the Endangered Species Act. (Dec 10, 2018).

- b. **AG-CON PARTICIPATION: BIODIVERSITY STREAM TESTING / CITIZENS SCIENCE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:**

Gail Miller noted an organized volunteer team from the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District in coordination with the Last Green Valley meets in the fall and spring each year to test waterways for about a seven to eight week period. Tests are conducted to determine many things including water temperature and the presence of ecoli or certain type's larvae are present. Certain types of larvae are important to sustain fish populations.

Citizens Science Volunteer Opportunities: There are opportunities for people to be a part of studying and documenting sightings or activities of bald eagles, other bird species, wild turkey survey, and bobcat.

7. New Business:

a. **FRANKLIN HILLS GOLF COURSE:**

First Selectman Charlie Grant updated members on the Franklin Hills Estates & Country Club Golf Course. The original project permit expired in May 2018. Currently Franklin Hills has filed a new site plan application with the Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission and the Planning & Zoning Commission.

The Agriculture and Conservation Commission (AG CON) has an advisory role and is responsible for managing conservation easements located on the property where the golf course is going to be constructed

Charlie Grant reviewed the new site plan and locations of the conservation easements. The easements restrict the type of activity that can take place on a piece of property such as construction of a building. The Army Corp of Engineers requires conservation easement approval from the Board of Selectmen and Agriculture and Conservation Commission. Chairman Allen read the following easement language into the record for approval:

“The Town of Franklin is a holder of a conservation easement granted to the Town of Franklin by Franklin Hills Estates & Country Club LLC., encumbering property located at the westerly terminant of Avery Lane and the westerly terminant of Lathrop Lane in Franklin CT. The conservation is dated January 27, 2014 and was recorded January 13, 2014 in Page 92 Volume 647 of the Franklin Land Records hereinafter the conservation easement. The conservation was granted to the Town of Franklin in conjunction with the proposed development of the golf course community on the real property of Franklin Hills Estates & Country Club LLC. portions of which are encumbered by the conservation easement. The conservation easement in compliance with the terms and conditions thereof is administered by the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Franklin jointly with the Agriculture and Conservation Commission and the Town of Franklin. The special permit for golf course development and for development of the real property of which is subject to the conservation easement expired in May of 2018 with only a portion of the construction of the golf course community completed. This correspondence is written with respect to an application submitted to the Town of Franklin Inland and Watercourses Commission and an application to be submitted to the Town of Franklin Planning & Zoning Commission for completion of development of the Franklin Hills Estates & Country Club, which plans are entitled “permitting documents for the Town of Franklin - Franklin Hills Estates & Country Club LLC., Town of Franklin Connecticut dated January 2019, Franklin Group LLC., Planning, Permitting, design and construction, administration services. This notice is provided to you pursuant to the provision of Section 47-42(d) of the Connecticut General Statute and Section 7.11 of the Town of Franklin Inland and Wetlands and Watercourses Commission Regulations. As the holder of the conservation easement and the parties responsible for the compliance of with enforcement of the terms and provision thereof we hereby notify you that we deem the applications and plans submitted to your respective commissions for completion of the development of Franklin Hills Estates Golf Course & Country Club to be in compliance with the terms and conditions of the conservation easement.”

MOTION #2 (2.21.19): made by Alan Holmberg **SECONDED BY** Craig Staebner that the Agriculture & Conservation Commission approves the terms and conditions of the conservation easement as read

VOICE VOTE: Gail Miller - Abstained

MOTION CARRIES

- b. **FARM BUREAU:** Alan Holmberg noted the Towns of Bozrah, Lebanon, and Franklin will host a workshop March 28, 2019 at the Lebanon Fire Station from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Topics will include, but not be limited to, mushroom growing, harvesting hemp and specialty grains.

c. **LAND CONSERVATION EFFORTS: BOMBERO, PELTIER, MOREHOUSE, MCCALLUM:**

The Bombero piece in Sprague has been purchased and is now public open space land. Work continues on purchasing the 66.3 acre Peltier property, the 25 acre Morehouse piece, and the 75 acre McCallum piece.

- d. **HB5254 – OPEN SPACE INITIATIVE:** This current house bill is about an act establishing a pilot program authorizing municipalities to impose a buyer's conveyance fee on real property to fund the purchase and stewardship of open space.

8. **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

- a. It was noted the proposal for a gun range in the Town of Griswold is off the table.
- b. DEEP has allocated funds for improving the East Coast Greenway. Part of the greenway trail that runs through the Towns of Voluntown and Sterling is deteriorating. These available funds would allow for improvements on these trails.

9. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

10. **ADJOURNMENT:**

MOTION #2 (2.21.19): made by Craig Staebner **SECONDED** BY Alan Holmberg that the Agriculture & Conservation Commission adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: UNANIMOUS;

MOTION CARRIES

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Allen and Sherry Pollard