



TOWN OF HAMDEN

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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FARMINGTON CANAL COMMISSION

Minutes: The Farmington Canal Commission, Town of Hamden held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, March 10, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the third floor Conference Room, Hamden Government Center. The following issues were discussed:

Commissioners in Attendance: David Schaefer, Peter Haller, Bill Horowitz, Johanna Becker, Barbara Gigliotti, Jennifer Cutrali

Commissioners Absent: Malachi Bandon (excused), Steve Humes, Mike Johnson

Others in Attendance: Bill Davies, FCRTTA, Dan Kops, Assistant Town Planner, Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk

David Schaefer called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

1. Review Minutes of Tuesday, January 5, 2010

Bill Horowitz made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2010 meeting. Barbara Gigliotti seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Guests at the meeting were Elisa Lupi, a teacher at Hamden Middle School and two of her eighth grade students, Maggie and Rachel. Mrs. Lupi and her students have been meeting every Tuesday afternoon for about 40 minutes to work on their trail project. They learned the history of the canal line. Mr. Thetford presented a slide show on the canal line to the students. Part of their project was a questionnaire "I see I hear I wonder" and they did a sketch of the path from the Middle School to the trail which the Commissioners reviewed. The students trimmed shrubs out of the way, pulled weeds and put in stakes (59) to mark the path. They still have a couple of smaller trees to cut down. The trail is ready to use once the Commission approves. Mrs. Lupi was offered a walkie talkie by the principal Mr. O'Connor, and they got permission slips for all

the kids because they were off school property. The area is under camera supervision at all times. Approximately 14 kids have shown interest (88 on team) in riding bikes along the trail to get to school. The students are also putting a survey together including questions as to whether or not students had heard of the canal and if they have used the trail. Their responses will be put on a graph. One of the questions is do you have to drive to get to the trail. Another is what part of the trail do you use. Mrs. Lupi would like Commissioners to visit their trail and make suggestions on what the students can do to help. The group will write a letter to Frank Cooper asking that the fence be removed at the top of the trail for access.

Ms. Cutrali asked if they plan to clean their portion of the trail, which they do. There was discussion on an adopt a mile program for the trail.

Mr. Schaefer said perhaps we can work together on a project such as a scavenger hunt. Hopefully soon we will have the Lockkeeper's House completed. The plan is to include a police substation and a canal museum in the building.

Mr. Schaefer said the river runs through a culvert that goes under Dixwell Avenue. The path accesses the trail and goes up right behind Bruegers. Park in the lower lot behind the Middle School to access the trail.

Mr. Schaefer thanked Ms. Lupi and the students for their work.

2. Phase I Update (Mt. Sanford Road to Todd Street)

Maintenance is an issue all along the trail. Mr. Kops spoke to Frank Rizzuti a week ago. There has been dumping on the new section of the trail and a part time person has been hired to work on that. Mr. Kops spoke to Frank Cooper today and discussed an adopt a spot program for the trail. An RFP process would be used to get people in place. Mr. Cooper is working on best practices. Mr. Schaefer said other communities might have done something similar. Mr. Davies mentioned that the businesses along the trail might be willing to clean up around their properties. Dale Kroop suggested that the idea be spread among the Chamber of Commerce members. We will do some research.

Ms. Gigliotti, Mr. Haller and Ms. Becker will meet with Parks & Recreation regarding a maintenance plan. There was discussion on budget requirements. Mr. Horowitz felt we should start with safety and work our way down. He has some concerns about root heaves and frost heaves.

3. Phase IIA Update (Todd Street to Hamden Hills Drive)

West Woods Road – This is a two year project. Ms. Becker has walked that area and finds a lot of litter right at the construction site behind Toninos and again near the sports bar. Ms. Becker will mail Mr. Kops the locations. She also mentioned a large tree down heading south in the area behind the sports bar and the Mobil Station. Mr. Bandon reported several issues along the trail and Ms. Tobin sent an email listing those to Parks & Recreation.

4. Phase IIB Update (Hamden Hills Drive to Connolly Parkway)

Mr. Haller reported graffiti on the wooden bridge on both sides. Mr. Horowitz said a person who was riding the trail at night reported debris piled across the trail.

5. Phase III Update (Connolly Parkway to New Haven Line)

Ms. Cutrali reported that there is a lot of crime in the area of the newest section of the trail. She formed a block watch in her neighborhood. The people in that area don't want to report crime in the area. There is a lot of activity after dark. Mr. Schaefer related that Captain Lujick discussed that issue at one of our meetings. The trail is open from dusk to dawn. Do we have to change our policy and put lights up? Police are trying to make neighbors aware and call the activity in. Police keep records of accidents and/or criminal activity along the trail, but they don't want to overreact. Perhaps we should make contact with the police department again. Mr. Horowitz said one thing the police can do for us, is to create the codes they need to indicate the location of problems in their reporting.

Mr. Haller reported that Ms. Schomaker and several of her friends commute to New Haven on the trail. He encourages people in the neighborhood to use the trail. People using the trail keep the abusers away. Ms. Cutrali sees the police patrolling on bicycles. There is a police substation at the old Middle School, which is close by

Skiff Street Tunnel

Mr. Schaefer explained that the Town got permission from the Federal and State governments to use the unused funds allocated for Phase II to build the tunnel. The unused amount came to about \$1.450 million, which the Commission thought would be plenty to build the tunnel, until we got the cost estimates. We now have a set of plans complete with the security and lighting. The big issue is whether to close Skiff Street during construction. Mayor Jackson and Police Chief Wydra would prefer not to close Skiff Street. The state has granted us permission to do it either way, and bid as an add alternate. The estimate has come in at \$1,381,000 with Skiff Street closed during construction. If the road is not closed, the cost goes up \$1 million. The Town wants to add sidewalks on both sides of the road going over the bridge. The cost for that is \$91,000. We can look into putting the sidewalk only on one side. We also need an easement from the owners of the Stop & Shop parcel. The owners donated one mile of the trail. A survey was required, and has been done by the Engineering Department. Mr. Schaefer will draw up the easement and give it to the Town Attorney to review.

Additional Steps to be taken include finalizing the plans after they go through the semifinal review. An public informational meeting will be held. We will then go through the formal land use approval process to amend the special permit for Phase II before Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands. Next it will go before the Legislative Council for approval, followed by the bidding process, and the Town State agreement. The Council approved the easement on the north side. Mr. Kops should ask Tom Balskus to map the easement so we can present it to the property owner. Mr. Kops felt we already did that. Ms. Gigliotti suggested the Town get permission from Berkshire to use their property for storage. DOT has approved the plan to leave two lanes open during construction.

Mr. Schaefer said that if the road is not closed during construction, we will not be able to go forward because we don't have the money.

The plan for the tunnel includes four cameras broadcasting to the Police Department. The security plan was worked out with the Police Department. New Haven has decided to have gates that will be locked every night. Yale has agreed to have their Police Department open and lock the gates. Mr. Davies mentioned movement actuated lighting. Plans are in Mr. Kops office for anyone to review.

6. Old Business

Mr. Cooper provided the Commissioners with an update on requests for memorial benches, which they reviewed. Ms. Becker said perhaps we need benches that are not memorial benches. Mr. Schaefer wondered if we can find more large stones to use as benches.

7. New Business

An young Eagle Scout candidate submitted a plan for the area behind Breugers that was formerly Hamden Garden Center. Plans included benches and plantings. Mr. Schaefer had some concerns about maintenance and does not want the area to be a problem if it is not maintained. It should not become a burden to Parks & Recreation. Perhaps we can ask that the troop take responsibility for the maintenance. It was suggested that bushes and trees be planted, and not flowers that would require more maintenance. Commissioners felt that this project should only be approved if it is self sustainable or if there is plan to maintain it. The Farmington Canal Commission encouraged Parks & Recreation to take a look at the plan and make sure it can be maintained and they can mow around it, etc.

There was discussion on a request for a community service project, perhaps cleaning up an area of the trail. Ms. Tobin will give the information to Mr. Cooper.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Haller made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Becker seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Clerk of the Commission