



# TOWN OF HAMDEN

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Curt Balzano Leng  
Mayor

*REVISED 10-6-15*

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## FARMINGTON CANAL COMMISSION

**Minutes:** The Farmington Canal Commission, Town of Hamden held a Regular Meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2015 in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following topics were discussed:

Commissioners in Attendance: David Schaefer, Richard Weiner, Bill Horowitz, Mark Anton, Johanna Becker, Kathy Larson

Commissioners Absent: Mike Johnson, Malachi Blandon

Others in Attendance: John and Tracy Pascarella, concerned citizens; Claudia O'Connell of the Farmington Canal Rails to Trails Association; Mimsie Coleman, Director of Arts Recreation and Culture; Police Chief Thomas Wydra

### 1. Call to Order

Mr. Schaefer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and invited our guests to speak.

Claudia O'Connell of the Farmington Canal Rails to Trails Association was at the meeting to replace the kiosk at Brooksvale Park, at the suggestion of their group. The towns to the north have been standardizing their kiosks. They are hoping to post events on the back side of the kiosks. She asked who can post things. They would like to place a new map holder, meeting notices, etc. They don't have a license to post items. They would offer financial support for upgrading the kiosks between New Haven and Cheshire.

Mr. Schaefer said his recollection is that we have two kiosks in Hamden, Todd Street and Brooksvale Park. We are talking about signage/kiosks in southern Hamden. Our highest priority is maintaining what we have. We have limited funds, but plan to make some repairs to

pavement, stonedust, etc. There is a process if FCRTTA wants to help finance the kiosk. They would need approval from Planning and Zoning and the Legislative Council.

Mr. Horowitz asked if the FCTTA is going to pay for an improvement, can they hire a contractor. Mr. Kops said he would have to look into that and whether it is something that Public Works would have to do. They would have to get an outside estimate to determine the value if the repair is to be a gift to the Town. Ms. O'Connell said their group accepts gifts and they pay annual dues. We have to plan on what kind of signage we want and see if the town has the money or if we need to go to private.

Mr. Schaefer said we do not allow private for profit businesses to post information on the trail. About a year ago the locks on the kiosks were changed and Ms. Larson cleaned up the inside of the kiosks. Ms. Larson said she tends to take down things that don't belong on the outside. Mr. Horowitz said he has updated maps that could be placed in the kiosks. Ms. O'Connell said there are some things her organization would like to post, events that would connect the southern end to the northern end as far as activities go. Ms. Larson mentioned an increased following of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail's website. Mr. Horowitz noticed signs from different organizations describing various road races/activities. Ms. Coleman said Parks and Recreation has the authority to make the rules.

Mr. Schaefer said the Farmington Canal Rails to Trails Association has been in existence for 25 years. It started when there was a proposal to build a mall. That is when they discovered the former canal and railroad tracks.

Tracy and John Pascarella own property in southern Hamden and are concerned regarding signage and security in that area.

Mr. Schaefer said safety and security on the trail has always been a concern. The commission discussed the fact that users drive away the abusers. Lights, blue lights, phones etc. have also been discussed. Publicity has gone up on trail incidents because Yale has to inform their students and faculty. There was a front page article in last Sunday's Register with some good and some other comments. There was also an editorial in Wednesday's Register.

Mr. Schaefer welcomed Police Chief Wydra to the meeting. Chief Wydra said he is a frequent user of the trail and loves to run there. He feels safe and said the trail is a jewel. He tasked some of his employees with pulling information regarding incidents on the trail. It is difficult because the trail doesn't have an address, nor do some of the parking lots abutting the trail. The few violent crimes happened late at night including a shooting. These were not legitimate users. In addition, some of the incidents reported did not happen on the trail, but near it. There have been a couple of robberies of phones, indecent exposures, etc. They need to determine the best way to track incidents. Mr. Schaefer said we have two parking lots, one at Todd Street and one at Sherman Avenue. The one at West Woods Road is owned by Mr. Hoyt and trail users are sometimes allowed to park there. Other times there are cones blocking entry.

Mr. Pascarella suggested the trail be divided into sectors to help determine where incidents happen. Ms. O'Connell wondered how other towns are handling it. Mr. Kops said the tricky thing about assigning addresses is that properties are town owned, state owned, and private property, over which we have easements.

Mr. Kops mentioned mile markers. There was discussion on bollards and vehicle access to the trail. The Fire Department, Public Works and Parks have keys for the bollards. Chief Wydra said there needs to be a conversation about the bollards. He said there have been 39 reported incidents since 2012. The chances of being a victim of crime on the trail are minute.

Chief Wydra said we have two substations, one near the Artist's housing development on Dixwell Avenue and another at the Lock Keeper's House on Whitney Avenue. Next week they are going to have code blue call boxes installed at the substations and video cameras to monitor the call boxes. He thinks we should expand that program along the trail. The police don't like fences because it gives perpetrators a place to hide. Mr. Schaefer mentioned call boxes in the tunnel. Chief Wydra said they are used sporadically, but are helpful in medical situations.

The Pascarellas own property near Dudley Street. He said his friend owns a business across the street from the Highwood Bar and Grill and has a good view of that property. He said this property is a prime problem, with people going in and out the back of the building near the trail.

Chief Wydra said he was talking about reported crime, but people need to report any crime. He said bike patrol overtime has gone from \$5,000 to \$50,000 in the budget. They do focus on the trail in southern Hamden with bike patrols. Block watch residents report people on the trail at night.

Mr. Horowitz mentioned that there are significant numbers of people using the trail to commute to New Haven, and they are coming home between 3:30 and 5:30 when it could be starting to get dark. There is an ordinance on the books that says you can be fined \$50 for disobeying the rules of the parks/trail. Ms. Coleman wondered if the fine should be added to the rules.

Mrs. Pascarella asked if there was funding for surveillance cameras in the capital budget. Chief Wydra said there are funds for the surveillance cameras.

Chief Wydra asked what hours are most important to have bike patrols.

Chief Wydra wants to convene a team from the Police Department, Fire Department, Public Works and Parks to go walk the trail and choose the places to place security devices. Mr. Horowitz recommended George Heinz, the Director of Security Systems at Yale, as a resource. They have recently installed 2000 security boxes on their campus.

Ms. O'Connell mentioned polling her running group of 70 as to where they might want to see a call box.

Yale Security is seen along the trail, but the New Haven Police Department does not have a presence there.

Ms. O'Connell and Mr. Horowitz will check to see what security is being planned from Cheshire north. Mr. Horowitz suggested mile markers and a map of the mile marker as a point of reference.

Ms. Coleman said the Town Attorney advised her to work the old trail rules in to the new rules for signage. She said rules must be posted for legal and informational reasons. She distributed the proposed rules to commissioners.

Mr. Pascarella asked if signs would be posted saying the area is being monitored by video cameras. This needs further discussion. There was discussion on no smoking which appears in the new rules. No littering was also mentioned.

**Ms. Larson made a motion to approve the new trail rules as amended. Mr. Weiner seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.**

**2. Review Minutes of July 15, 2015**

Page 2, item 8, first line, change wask to walk

**Mr. Horowitz made a motion to approve the minutes of July 15<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Becker seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.**

**3. Report from Dan Kops**

Mr. Kops is working to get specs ready for the trail repair project from the northern end as far south as the money allows. Some of the areas have been flagged. The bid specs are ready and will be in the paper tomorrow or Monday. There will be a mandatory site walk, and we are hoping to get the project underway in October. Once a contractor is selected work will begin, and the contractor will be in regular contact with Mike Siciliano of Public Works for daily discussion. If a problem is greater than appears on the surface, Mr. Siciliano can okay what the necessary work. Mr. Anton mentioned that they marked every little crack. Mr. Kops said they will be using crack sealer. They considered putting in barriers to the roots but that would be cost prohibitive. Public Works will repair the stone dust and an area behind Stop & Shop.

Mr. Kops mentioned another signage project that is headed by the Town's risk manager. Mr. Giulietti was asked by the Town Attorney to deal with the safety signage that was originally put on the trail and has disappeared over time.

Mr. Kops received word that someone has blocked the entrance to the trail near Columbus Avenue. Public Works is removing the plywood.

Mr. Horowitz feels roller blading on the trail is dangerous.

The Council of Governments is preparing some mapping and will include the trail.

There was discussion on areas where dirt accumulates on the trail, causing bikers to skid.

Mr. Kops said we have \$40,000 to add drainage infrastructure under Sherman Avenue. The assistant town engineer feels there is a very simple fix that Public Works can do.

There was discussion on the paint on the Dixwell Avenue Bridge. The commission prefers dark brown paint.

4. Phase I Update (Mt. Sanford Road to Todd Street)
5. Phase IIA Update (Todd Street to Hamden Hills Drive)  
The Town has not taken ownership of the West Woods Intersection to date.
6. Phase IIB Update (Hamden Hills Drive to Connolly Parkway)
7. Phase III Update (Connolly Parkway to New Haven Line)
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. Adjournment

**Ms. Becker made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Horowitz seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.**

**The November meeting will be rescheduled to November 5<sup>th</sup> due to election day.**

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gerry Tobin, Clerk of the Commission