

**Commission on Conservation & Agriculture**  
**MINUTES**

**Regular Meeting of November 19, 2019**

<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Elisabeth Holder	Larry Owen	Kush Puri	Marek Kozikowski
Jane Brawerman	David Bauer	Noah Cohen	
James Miller	Katherine Owens	Rosemary Ostfeld	
Bob Daniels			
Brian Gartner			
Michael Thomas			
Kate Miller			
Judy Konopka			
Barbara Schukoske			
Ellen Lukens			

**A. Call to Order**

Meeting called to order at 7:04 p.m.

**B. Accept the Agenda**

A motion was made by Commissioner Gartner to add agenda item E.4 Urban Farm Lease and Workshop. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gartner to add agenda item E.5 Chiaravallo Property Acquisition. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gartner to accept the agenda as modified. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas. The motion passed unanimously.

**C. Public Forum**

Commissioner Daniels initiated a discussion about the Urban Farming Symposium that was held on October 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. Notes were collected from the event and were organized by Wesleyan students, Kush Puri and Noah Cohen, in the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems program with guidance provided by Professor Rosemary Ostfeld. The students are developing a survey to be distributed to local farmers to gather information that may be useful to provide them assistance and bring locally grown food to residents.

The Commission agreed to review the survey for comments and suggestions.

The students discussed a website that was created for people to buy from local farms. The URL is [www.healthyplaneat.com](http://www.healthyplaneat.com).

**D. Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Gartner made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Lukens and Konopka abstaining.

**E. Request for Comment**

**1. Livingston Updates**

Chairwoman Holder reported that the appraisals have been submitted and Christine was working towards the next steps.

## **2. Timber Management**

Chairwoman Holder reported that the Staff is working with Eric Hansen on a plan for the Wilcox property.

## **3. Country Club Road**

Chairwoman Holder reported that property owner was once enthusiastic about selling the property to the city, then backed off but has now resumed contact with the city and seems to want to give the land as an outright gift.

(Mayor Ben Florsheim and Chief of Staff Bobbye Knoll Peterson entered the meeting at 7:21pm to formally introduce themselves to the Commission.)

## **4. Urban Farm Lease and Workshop**

Kozikowski reported that the lease/use of the property on Miller Street has had an 8-24 review by the Planning & Zoning Commission and approval by the Common Council.

Several Commissioners expressed displeasure that the Commission was asked for input at the September meeting but sought more information. The item never returned and was voted upon without input from the Commission.

Commissioner Gartner made a motion to state the following for the record:

As the City's Commission on Conservation & Agriculture we received a request for comment by Planning staff in September on a proposal for an urban farm in the north end. The Commission had asked for input at the September meeting and had been told that written proposal would be forthcoming, but that proposal never came before the Commission. The Commission learned that the proposal progressed through the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Common Council. The Commission on Conservation & Agriculture has members with expertise in agriculture, and commissioners had substantive comments on what they understood of the proposal, and questions.

For future projects we hope that when requesting comment from the Commission the Department of Planning, Conservation and Development seek that comment prior to advancing a proposal. We believe that the public has the right to expect this commission to review and provide comment on projects, proposals and policies that are related to conservation and agriculture; we therefore hope that the Planning Department and other commissions will consistently ask for, and review, comment from the Commission on these matters.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Konopka. The motion passed unanimously.

## **5. Chiaravallo Property Acquisition**

Kozikowski gave an update on the progress. The US Department of Agriculture has reduced their funding for the acquisition of the development rights to \$160,000 leaving the State and the City to bridge the gap between the funding and agreed upon purchase price of \$361,050. The State, who is paying 55% of the balance has already committed to paying its proportion, which includes the new increase. The City must go through the process to vote on allocating funding for the new increase. Commissioner Miller noted that the Common council had approved \$72,000 for this purchase in January. Therefore, the additional money that would be needed would come to about \$18,000. The total expenditure from the City is \$89,906. The funding source for the additional money needed is the Open Space Bond that was recently approved.

Commissioner Gartner made a motion to approve any additional funds needed for appropriated funds necessary for the acquisition of the development rights of the Chiaravalle property. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lukens. The motion passed unanimously.

**F. Officer and Committee Reports**

**1. Chairman's report**

**i. Update on Open Space Bond**

Chairwoman Holder reported the results on the open space bond being 78% of the votes were a "Yes" and 22% of the votes were a "No."

**2. Trails Committee**

**i. Trail Work for Fall**

Chairwoman Holder reported that trail work has not started yet but will soon. The Commission discussed options for markers of trails including tags on trees or signage as options. Signage could also provide opportunities to provide education to the public.

The Commission discussed the challenges at Hubbard park including that many trails are not complete and it is unclear where property lines are located.

**3. Agriculture Committee**

**i. Farm Market and Stand Ordinance Update**

The Commission discussed possible zoning text amendments that address agricultural uses, farm stands and farm markets. The Commission will forward the proposal to Kozikowski for review and input.

The Commission discussed the challenges of how the PA490 program is administered in the City.

**4. Outreach Committee**

**i. Future events**

Commissioner Gartner has several ideas for outreach and will present them at the next meeting.

**5. Open Space Management Committee**

No new information to discuss.

**6. Open Space Acquisition Committee**

Chairwoman Holder reported that the acquisition of the Livingston property is proceeding.

The Commission discussed options to solicit potential properties to acquire including send letters to the local newspapers seeking opportunities for acquisitions and reaching out to property owners who previously expressed interest.

Properties that contain portions of the Blue Trails and properties in Maromas may be properties to target.

The Commission discussed the possibilities of updating the Open Space Plan as part of the Plan of Conservation and Development update.

**G. Old Business**

**1. Kleen Energy Property**

Chairwoman Holder reported that the process for the acquisition of this property has stalled. The possible donation of this land to the city was expressed verbally when the Kleen Energy Plant was proposed, but presumably nothing was ever put into writing. There may be the possibility of

acquiring this land, but it will depend on the inclination of the current property owner. The Commission/ staff should reconnect with the property owner.

## **2. Landfill Trail**

Chairwoman Holder reported that the plan to install a trail along the base of the landfill is proceeding slowly but moving forward.

## **3. Open Space Regulations**

No new information to discuss.

## **4. Red Maple Swamp**

No new information to discuss.

## **H. New Business**

None.

## **I. Member Forum**

Commissioner Brawerman discussed how the Commission has no budget and has no opportunity to pay for training opportunities including but not limited to the Connecticut Association of Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commissions annual conference.

Commissioner Brawerman inquired about an indoor soccer facility that is proposed in Middlefield near the municipal border.

Commissioner Gartner brought it to the Commission's attention that the WPC is seeking new customers and are seeking opportunities to expand water lines to access new areas. The Commissioner expressed concern about the City selling a taxpayer-owned resource without assessing future needs. It is unclear if the Commission would have any involvement in the future decisions of this sort.

## **J. Adjournment**

Commissioner Gartner made a motion to end the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Daniels and passed unanimously. Meeting ended at 9:00pm.