



Seymour Conservation Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Community Center Conference Room
20 Pine Street, Seymour, CT 06483
Thursday November 20, 2025 – 6:00 PM

COPY RECEIVED
DATE: 11/24/25
TIME: 11:00 AM
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

Members Present: Joe Niezelski, Jr., Chair; Karen Bertapelle, Vice-Chair; Nancy Chucta; Marietta Sabetta

Others: John McKenzie, Land Use Dept Liaison; Jeff Baryla, Advisor; Edward Bertapelle

Members Absent: George Cipows

1. Call to Order

Chair Joe Niezelski, Jr. called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM

All present stood, saluted the flag, and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair appointed Jeff Baryla to Secretary Pro Tempore for this meeting.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Approval of October 16, 2025 Minutes

Motion by M. Sabetta to approve the Oct 16, 2025 regular meeting minutes, as presented. Seconded by N. Chucta. There was no discussion. Motion carried 4-0.

4. Reports & Correspondence

• J. Baryla, Trail Manager, summarized the Trails Report **[Attached]** for the board. These monthly reports will be presented to Beautification Commission starting 2026.

• Joe Welsh, Shelton Land Trust President, emailed a reminder: 181 Great Hill is for sale. The board discussed details about this property and its potential, if acquired.

5. New Business

A. Approval of 2026 Regular Meeting Schedule

Commissioners discussed and agreed upon the following dates for all 2026 meetings:

January 15	February 19	March 19	April 23	May 21	June 18
July 23	August 20	September 17	October 15	November 19	December 17

The Conservation Commission will meet regularly in the Christopher Willis Conference Room of the Seymour Community Center beginning at 6 PM, unless otherwise specified.

Motion by N. Chucta to approve the 2026 regular meeting schedule, as presented.

Seconded by M. Sabetta. There was no discussion. Motion carried 4-0.

B. Discussion on Paper Streets

J. Baryla gave the definition of paper streets and their context within the state of CT. Unless a municipality chooses to formally abandoned them, paper streets remain a legal public right-of-way for pedestrians to use. Jeff listed some of the paper streets in town, highlighting a few in or near our open space parcels. He had spoken to Town Engineer Bryan Nesteriak about clearing and improving the public's access to them, possibly adding features/amenities like native pollinators and benches. Bryan supported this.

6. Old Business

A. Status of Outreach & Education

J. Baryla noted the Beautification Commission will be approving their volunteer Work Party schedule later this evening for the remainder of November through January. It will be included in the **Trails Report**, and attached to this meeting's minutes.

B. Updates on 2025 Goals

- John McKenzie invited all of the Town's Adopt a Spot members to the 7:00 PM Beautification Meeting to discuss future plans in line with Nancy's native plantings recommendation. All commissioners are invited to stick around and attend, if possible.
- The seed collecting opportunity that Nancy had established will continue in 2026
- Joe and Jeff visited Paramount and the Seymour Land Trust's Rolling Hills Forest last month. Joe thinks both properties offer great possibilities for the Town and the public.
- Jeff documented everyone's "Top 3 Conservation Wish List" for 2026:
Joe – 1. Trail signage and kiosks, 2. Invasive plant management plan, 3. Address ATVs
Karen – 1. Kiosks, 2. Butterfly garden, 3. Address ATVs
Nancy – 1. Native Plant Policy, 2. Municipal management of invasives, 3. Nothing else.
Marietta – 1. Naming our trails, 2. A nature center type place, 3. onlyinourstate.com
Jeff addressed a couple points. Trail signage and kiosks are already part of Beautification Commission's long-term list, and he has a working action plan for all invasive plants.

C. 'The Seymour Sun'

The next issue is due out December 20. Articles may be submitted now for consideration.

7. Any Other Business

J. Baryla shared that the USFWS monthly webinar series will resume on Tues Dec 16 with the topic "Collaborative Conservation Successes, Challenges, and Building Trust". The Service hopes to host the webinars that would have been in Oct and Nov at a later date.

J. Baryla asked J. McKenzie if a bulletin board could be installed in the hallway and call it 'Conservation Corner'. Newsletters, trail maps, and other useful information to be placed there for the public. Inland Wetlands could use it, too. John will run this by Jim Baldwin.

8. Public Comment

None.

9. Adjournment

Motion by M. Sabetta. Seconded by K. Bertapelle.

All in favor (4-0). The meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Baryla

Secretary Pro Tempore/Advisor to the Commission

Seymour Conservation Commission will next meet on Thurs Dec 18 at 6:00 PM.

[Attachment 1] Trails Report for November 20, 2025

Little Laurel Lime Ridge Park [LL]

Work Party held on 11/01 (2 hrs total). Stuart and I walked and cleared a portion of the Middle Benham paper street. I anticipate at least two more visits will be necessary to improve the trail a bit, and remove some large patches of barberry, wineberry, and pachysandra. We have a plan to address one entry point. There may be some encroachment issues to look into, as well.

Stuart returned on 11/20 to clean up the overlook, (1 hour), removing one trash bag of litter.

Paramount (pollinator garden) [PPG]

Work Party on 10/18 (2 hrs). Joe and I continued cutting and pulling invasive plants. We focused on the left side on the property, where autumn olive and burning bush are more abundant.

Keith Mitchell Forest [KMF]

A ribbon cutting for the newly acquired parcel was held on Tue Oct 21 at 9 AM. There was a work party on Saturday October 25. Six volunteers cut and pulled invasive plants from around the parking area and next to the trail head.

Gary Park (18 Osprey) [GP]

I continued managing the mugwort and knotweed on Thursday mornings whenever available. Our next focus will be restoring the original trail loop as it appears in the published trail guide, and incorporating some interpretive elements for public education (signs with QR codes, etc.).

Fountain Lake (North and South parcels) [FLN/FLS]

No work or maintenance performed. New Year's Day walk/hike planned around Lake Loop Trail. I'll reach out to the new Ansonia administration to see if they'd like to be involved or participate.

Rolling Hills Forest [RHF] (Land Trust parcel)

Following the work party at PPG on 10/18, Joe and I visited RHF. We walked along three paper streets. These could be transformed into a potential loop trail in the future, if the Land Trust is open to that idea. We also observed two dirt bikes entering the forest via the end of Rolling Hills. Butternut is secured with a locking gate. So, they are going around it via an unsanctioned path.

Other

- I will include BMPs and other recommendations for 24 Chucta and Rolling Hills Forest that I am drafting into a combined report for the Seymour Land Trust.
- I'd still like commissioners to visit Seymour Dog Park with me, hopefully sometime soon.
- We are collaborating with SLT on public events to take place in the Legion Pool building.
- USFWS Dec 16 12pm: Collaborative Conservation Successes, Challenges, and Building Trust.

Upcoming work party schedule (as approved by the Seymour Beautification Commission)

Sat Dec 6 at PPG

Sat Dec 13 at KMF

Sat Dec 20 at LLLRP

Sat Jan 3 at PPG

Sat Jan 17 at KMF

Sat Jan 31 at LLLRP

Sat Feb 7 at PPG

All Saturday events start at 9:30 AM.

Thank you!

Jeff Barysa
Trail Manager