



CONNECTICUT EQUINE ADVISORY COUNCIL

P.O. Box 57 Durham, CT 06422-0057

Meeting Minutes of June 19, 2014

Attending:

Fred Mastele, Diane Ciano, David Frassinelli, Representative Debra Lee Hovey, Ginger Tullai

Excused:

Laurie Giannotti, Meg Sautter, Jan Collins, Ruth Beardsley

Absent:

CFPA representative in place of retired member Leslie Lewis

Call to Order:

The meeting was held at the Northeast Utilities Building in Berlin. Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm by Fred.

Review Meeting Minutes:

Meeting minutes of March 20, 2014 were reviewed. Motion by Diane to accept. Fred seconded. Motion unanimously carried.

Legislation:

Representative Debra Lee Hovey announced that she would not be running for re-election and her last day in office will be January 6, 2015. She reassured us that she would continue to advocate for equestrian use and that it was important that equestrians continue to contact their own representatives and ask them to “co-sponsor” and “raise bills” that pertain to our industry, in particular trail preservation, especially when large development is happening.

A discussion of what equestrians can do included proposing to local planning and zoning commissions to recognize as much as possible contiguous trails for passive recreation in the Town's Master Plan and to provide protection for private property trails in Subdivision Regulations is a pro-active approach to saving trails. Several ‘smart growth model towns’ utilize Open Space funds collected from developers and put aside these monies, along with state grants to purchase property to protect strategic trails and open space elsewhere. By volunteering on your local planning & zoning commission or attending meetings, you can help to preserve trails and open space in your town.

She also encouraged the EAC and equestrian community to work to gain accessibility to utility and water company lands, as has been previously addressed in the past by the Bethany Horsemen over 20 years ago and to use this “model” and other success stories for opening more lands to equestrian use. She recommended that EAC give recognition to the person(s) responsible.

Representative Debra Lee also announced to the EAC that her colleague, Representative Laura Hoydick of Stratford will continue to advocate for the equine community in Hartford.

Fred reported on the end of 2013 and the first half of 2014 brought us a Supreme Court decision and legislation regarding our “vicious horses”. Basically the Supreme Court determined that horses by nature are mischievous and have a propensity to bite, and threw the case back to the lower court to render a decision in this particular case. Fortunately, with legislation proposed by Governor Malloy and wording suggested by Doug Dubitsky, Public Act 14-54 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LIABILITY OF OWNERS AND KEEPERS OF DOMESTICATED HORSES, PONIES, DONKEYS AND MULES was recently signed into law and went into effect immediately. This will keep horses from being judged as a species and allow each case to be judged on an individual basis.

Other bills the CHC has followed were the “Vulnerable User Bill”, a horse tax exemption bill and several bills related to the protection and funding of our State Forests and Parks. Both the “Vulnerable User” and tax bill passed and have been signed by the Governor. They are Public Acts 14-31 and 14-33 and both go into effect October 1, 2014. The only drawback of the tax exemption bill is that it has to be done by each municipality and it is suggested that individuals approach their respective town governments to encourage them to vote for the exemption. The other bills either died in committee or never made it past the public hearing.

State Forest & Park Updates:

Natchaug State Forest – Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp: Diane reported that CHC is very pleased and appreciative of Laurie Giannotti -Trails Coordinator along with Tom Nosal of the DEEP who has been working with CHC in creating a trail map of the yellow diamond trails (5- 10 & 15 mile loop) of the trail systems in Natchaug & Goodwin Forests. A report was submitted to the Council on the work that has been completed at the camp. CHC is waiting on the toilets to be installed to continue further work at the camp.

Salmon River State Forest: EAC will continue its efforts to work with the DOT and DEEP in opening the Comstock Bridge for handicap accessibility that will also benefit equestrian’s ability to utilize the bridge to safely connect the two sides of the forest. Laurie had e-mailed before the meeting that David Buckley, DEEP Supervisor reminded her that DOT is responsible for the bridge structure. Consequently, DEEP can't authorize changes to the bridge. She gave Diane the DOT contact info: Kevin Nursick 860 594-3003. Diane will contact Kevin.

CHC-VHP member, Ginger Tullai will be working on marking a trails system at Salmon River State Forest and the connection to Day Pond State Park. It was noted that DEEP map needs to be worked on further regarding the trail systems and connecting multiple use trails to both areas.

Other Trail Reports:

Volunteer Horse Patrol Report: Diane reported on the 11 year statistics of the Volunteer Horse Patrol. The total savings of our 11 years in volunteer service hours is **\$584,532** ! The 11 year totals include **14,779 Patrols**, **29,976 Patrol Hours** with **5,929 Trail Maintenance Hours**.

New Business:

Hop River Greenway: There was discussion on several complaints over the past two years sent to DEEP regarding significant number of piles of manure left in the middle of the trail, in particular the Shoddy Mill Rd. area and earlier reports on the covered bridge that seem to offend other user groups. Signage at trail heads, kiosks and along trails such as this one and the Airline was discussed. The CHC will look into having signs made “Help Preserve Equestrian Use of Trails” with the slogan: “Curb It or Kick It.”

ATV Usage Report: Ginger reported on ATV usage. Day Pond/Comstock area is showing moderate use with new trails made as well as in Wopowog WMA. She also reported a fire still smoldering that she had to put out at Machimoodus SP. She followed the ATV tracks around the park and they ended up exiting/entering thru Sunrise Resort SP. Another property that has been reported to have heavy ATV use and damage and erosion is Babcock WMA.

River Council of Governments (COG) & Bridle Path Conservancy (BPC) – The CHC was contacted by the River COG for information on trail systems within their region for future planning. This region consists of the 17 towns of Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Lyme, Middlefield, Middletown, Lyme, Old Saybrook, Portland and Westbrook.

Trish Panico, President of the BPC attended a meeting of mixed user groups to locate any trails in the region and any input on trails that should be highlighted for use. She is encouraging local equestrians in these towns to add any trails they might know to the project for future preservation. Persons with trail info can contact Trish at trishpanico@gmail.com

Bridle Path Conservancy & Lower CT River Valley Horsemens Club – will be hosting a Trail Ride and Barbeque in celebration of their 10 year anniversary of BPC & the Quinimay Trail on Saturday – August 23rd, Deep River

Old Business:

Trail Surface Study:

Review and discussion of draft power point was tabled to our next meeting.

Tabled from previous meeting: Pathways in Connecticut link on DOT website – discussion of failure to mention horseback riding permitted anywhere on Air Line Trail and other trails.

Merritt Parkway Trail – David reports that meetings are ongoing about establishing a horseback riding trail in the 150 ft. easement on the south side of the Merritt Parkway. The Merritt Parkway Conservancy has been opposing it at public hearings being held by the DOT. The Merritt Parkway Trail Alliance has recently been formed which is in favor of it.

CT Forest & Park Association (CFPA) – The EAC is waiting on a representative replacement on the Council.

The next meeting of the EAC will be Thursday, September 18th at the Northeast Utilities meeting room located at 3333 Berlin Tpke., Newington, CT at 6:30 pm. All are welcome to attend

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Fred at 8:00 pm. Seconded by Diane. Unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Ciano

Acting Secretary, EAC
