

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2025, AT 7:00 PM, ROOM #210, TOWN HALL
84 SOUTH MAIN ST., CHESHIRE, CT 06410**

Present:

Karen Schnitzer – Chair
Laura Monte - Secretary
Randal Raines
Laura Monte
Sean Henri
Peter Prohaska
Albert Buell, Jr.

Staff/Guests:

Absent: David Schrumm, John Gawlak (Director of Parks & Recreation)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Karen Schnitzer called the meeting to order at 7:07PM.

II. ROLL CALL

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was determined to be present.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING JULY 9, 2025

Albert Buell, Jr. motioned to accept minutes from July 9, 2025; Peter Prohaska seconded the motion. Sean Henri & Laura Monte abstained.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Yankee Highlands

The Inlands & Wetlands Commission has approved the permit for New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) at Yankee highlands. The Environment commission would like to see a draft of the Land Use Agreement, Karen Schnitzer stated she spoke with John Gawalak, Director of Parks and Recreation, and he stated he will discuss at his department head meeting on September 11, 2025.

2. POCD

a. Public Comment session is in November according to Tyche.

Karen Schnitzer emailed Tyche and noted that she had not received any notifications pertaining to the POCD. She asked about the project timeline. She also mentioned

that commission members may wish to consider taking Wednesday off in November if they would like to attend as members of the public.

Sean Henri stated the initial draft of the POCD did include many environmental recommendations, but according to meeting minutes, some of those recommendations may have been removed or changed. He clarified that the purpose of the plan is to identify which parcels are suitable for development and which should be preserved as open space. While he does not believe the commission has a formal role in deciding which properties should be covered, he emphasized that they can help educate the public on available tools, such as identifying areas zoned for commercial or industrial use and understanding how to take action to conserve land.

Karen mentioned that the Environment Commission can use the Sustainability Fair as an opportunity to educate the public. Peter Prohaska mentioned that the Sustainability Fair may have limited reach in educating the public. Sean suggested inviting larger organizations or individuals with a large reach to assist in amplifying the message.

Karen offered to reach out to Christine at Naugatuck Valley Council of Government's (NVCOG) pertaining to putting together a public program possibly at the library to educate residents on the correct route to go to help influence the POCD.

b. Link to Conservation section of POCD:

<https://cheshirect.portal.civicclerk.com/event/956/files/attachment/831>

3. CT Trail Finder

No Updates.

4. Trail Stewards Group – Update

Laura Monte reported that Trail Stewards have completed five work sessions focused on invasive plant management along Fenn Road, the Farmington Trail, and at Lock 12. She noted that conditions on Fenn Road have improved significantly. The group currently has ten active Trail Stewards. Peter Prohaska has requested to be added to the Trail Stewards email list.

5. Open Space Management – Updates

a. Roaring Brook

No Update.

b. Boulder Knoll -update from Sean Henri

Senri Henri states that he and a group of scout volunteers completed some trail work at Boulder Knoll on August 24, 2025. The trail requires monthly maintenance during the summer, and invasive plants remain a significant challenge. There is still plenty of work to be done before the trail is fully functional and accessible. Sean plans to return with volunteers within the next week or two to continue. Additionally, an Eagle Scout project is scheduled for late September or October to install trail signage. Sean Henri will also be leading a Trail Trekkers walk at Boulder Knoll in December.

Karen asked about the next steps regarding deer stands. Sean reported that he had passed the matter along to John, who would be the best point of contact. Sean stated the individual looking into the issue was expected to take action this fall. Karen will follow up with John Gawalk for an update. Sean also recommended that the property boundaries be clearly marked in some way.

c. Fenn Road – Update regarding invasives – Laura Monte

d. DeDominicis – Forester report is available

Milkweed and goldenrod are abundant in the area and provide important support for butterflies. It was agreed that mowing should not take place until October. The parking area should be mowed consistently, as it contains many invasive plants, but the other areas should not be mowed. Sean reported ATV damage, including a broken bridge and torn-up trails at the end of Corliss. Karen noted that the damage may have already been repaired. Sean last visited the site at the end of May.

e. Cheshire Park – Disc Golf Course Update

f. Yankee Highlands

The DEEP Forester Walk is scheduled for October 17, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. Participants will meet in the parking lot. Sean Henri and Laura Monte are interested in attending.

6. Environment Commission Projects & Priorities List/Updates

John Gawlak inquired about progress on open space boundary signage. Sean Henri asked if funds are available, and Karen Schnitzer confirmed that funds exist, but a sign design still needs to be chosen. Sean suggested making a formal request to Sean Kimball to identify the boundaries, citing concerns about illegal hunting and public safety. It was requested that the Town assist in marking the boundaries, with signs reading “Cheshire Open Space Border.” Karen added that if any other topics need to be added to the Priority list, she will send an email to Sean Henri.

7. Sustainability Fair October 4, 2025, 10am -2:00pm – Boulder Knoll

Karen states the Environment Commission is signed up to participate in the Sustainability Fair at Boulder Knoll Farm on Saturday, October 4, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, with set-up beginning at 9:30 AM. A table and tent will be needed, if anyone has one, they can volunteer. Laura Monte and Peter Prohaska expressed interest in attending for part of the time, and Sean Henri will be available until noon. Karen will bring flyers and brochures for distribution, and a finalized schedule will be worked out closer to the date of the event.

8. HOA Updates

No Update.

9. Other Old Business

No Update.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Staff Report/ Town Council Liaison Report

Per an e-mail Karen Schnitzer had from John Gawlak, three open space parcels need to be reviewed following Yankee Highlands. The disc golf course baskets are installed, with signage still needed, and the course is currently playable but will be expected to finish within the next two to three months with positive early feedback. Parks and Recreation

will have a tent at the Fall Festival on Saturday September 13, 2025, and will also attend the Sustainability Fair, offering opportunities for the Environmental Commission to share information. The Town will be reviewing invasive species and investigating high bacteria levels around Mixville pond. The Bartlem Park project will be completed by Friday; John has applied through Connecticut Parks and Recreation to receive a Facility of Merit Award for the project. Town Council has approved funding for the splash pad. The Community Pool roof and Adaptive Field design projects are currently out to bid.

2. Letter for Papandrea Property Acquisition

Karen states that Mike Ceccorulli, on behalf of the Cheshire Land Trust, has arranged the acquisition of a parcel of land along the Quinnipiac River known as “Franks Field.” Christine O’Neill of Naugatuck Council of Governments (COG) will facilitate the paperwork. Mike has provided a letter of support template for the Environment Commission to use. The land is currently being farmed and will remain available for agricultural use.

This project is significant because it safeguards open space along the Quinnipiac River, preserves farmland, and protects the natural environment. Karen asked for everyone’s support in submitting the letter, which is due by November 3rd to Christine and Mike so the process can move forward. A motion was made by Karen to move ahead with the template letter and seconded by Randy. All were in favor, except for Al, who did not vote. David Schrumm will assist in drafting the final version of the letter. The property will be owned and managed by the Cheshire Land Trust, not the municipality.

3. Budget – Invasive Plant Management Tools

Karen Schnitzer inquired about using available funds to purchase signs and invasive management tools. She also raised the question of where such tools could be stored if purchased. Sean stated that he has a pushable string trimmer and asked whether the Town has storage space available. He also mentioned the need for ramps to assist with loading equipment into a truck or trailer, if it was purchased.

4. Grants

Not discussed.

5. Map Vernal Pools

Not discussed.

6. Other New Business

a. Education Opportunities – Laura Monte & Karen Schnitzer attended a CLEAR class on site reading plans.

Both Karen and Laura stated that the class was very interesting, and if they see any similar classes in their e-mails, they will forward it to the rest of the Environment Commission.

b. Other New Business

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) is hosting a conference on Native plants on November 13, 2025.

The Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commission (CACIWC) will have a conference coming up on Saturday November 15, 2025, in Bristol, CT. Karen Schnitzer stated she will be attending this conference and is going

to contact John Gawlak to see if it is possible for the Town of Cheshire to pay for the Environment Commissions attendance.

Karen stated that the Annual Report is coming due, if anyone in the commission has anything they would like to contribute let her know.

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 8, 2025

X. ADJOURNMENT.

Karen Schnitzer motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Peter Prohaska seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15PM

Attest:

KRISTA MASSEY, MINUTES CLERK