

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026, 7:00 P.M., COUNCIL ROOM 207, 84 SOUTH MAIN ST., CHESHIRE,
CT 06410**

Present:

Karen Schnitzer
David Schrumm
Randal Raynes
Laura Monte
Sean Henri

Staff/Guests: John Gawlak, Director of Parks and Recreation

Absent: Peter Prohaska, Tim Sullivan

Karen Schnitzer called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

Noelle Shepard called the roll, and a quorum was present. Peter Prohaska and Tim Sullivan were absent from the meeting.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

i. Approval of minutes from February 11, 2026 Special Meeting

David Schrumm motioned to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2026 meeting, and Laura Monte seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passed unanimously by those present.

vii. Yankee Highlands/NEMBA Update

Karen Schnitzer moved this agenda item to earlier in the meeting. John Gawlak explained that this item is on the Town Council's agenda for their regular meeting on Tuesday night.

The Commission discussed the trail maps with Francisco Perez of CT NEMBA. Laura Monte expressed concern that the updated map included trails beyond the northwest area that had previously been agreed upon. Following discussion, it was decided that the proposed map will be updated to only the northwest portion of the property as previously discussed.

Francisco Perez explained that the first phase would take CT NEMBA approximately a year to complete. The ERT is also scheduled to take approximately a year.

Dave Schrumm motioned to forward the Environment Commission's recommendation to the Town Council to approve the first phase of the MOU with CT NEMBA to include only the northwest territory as discussed, and Randy Raines seconded the motion.

All in favor, the motion passed unanimously by those present.

viii. Bee Lease Recommendation for Town Council

This agenda item was moved to earlier in the meeting. Bill Hesbach, CT Beekeepers Association, provided the history that when the Association first negotiated the lease with the Town, the objective was to establish a teaching yard to teach young people about pollinators. He explained that it is a living classroom, which draws forty or fifty students monthly. He clarified that the honey is not sold.

He explained that the hives vary but are there all year long. He mentioned that the area at Boulder Knoll does not have the density to remove native pollinators from the area. Blue Hills Orchard and Drazen Orchards are both in flight range of the colonies.

Bill Hesbach clarified that it is not easy to move ten hives. He explained that it is not possible to switch to native bees as they cannot be kept. He talked about how he provides instruction on how to build homes to help support the native bee population. He mentioned that the Boulder Knoll was selected because of its floral density - 116 species in that 150-acre area including 40 acres of golden rod.

Bill Hesbach mentioned that he keeps an observational assessment/bloom calendar, and Sean Henri asked if he could share this. He explained that he utilizes his drone to look at pollinators. Sean Henri asked if the safety barriers are sufficient. Bill Hesbach explained that there are signs.

Sean Henri to formulate some questions. Discussion was had on additional safety precautions that could be put in place.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

i. POCD – Second Public Session will be on March 9, 2026

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

Karen Schnitzer explained that they have not received updates on whether updates were made to the draft POCD document.

Discussion was had about the possibility of sending a letter to PZC from the Environment Commission asking for updates. She reviewed some of their suggested changes.

ii. Quinnipiac River and Mill River Watershed Association updates

Laura Monte updated that she is now a member of the Mill River Watershed Association.

Sean Henri mentioned that the Assistant Town Manager Andrew Martelli will be following up with the Town Council regarding an appointment to the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association.

iii. Educational Opportunities & Events

Karen Schnitzer updated the Commission members that the Connecticut Land Conservation Conference will be taking place on March 21st. Discussion was had on members attending this conference as well as other trainings.

iv. EC Budget – Updates and discussion

v. Trails Stewards Group - report

John Gawlak updated that he submitted the proposed budget for the Environment Commission to the Town Manager and is awaiting the status.

He further mentioned that he has gotten a quote for five parcels for the consultant work on management of the open spaces.

vi. Open Space Management Updates and news

ix. EC Projects and Priorities Spreadsheet List/updates

Sean Henri mentioned that this could be discussed at the next meeting. He is in the process of updating the list and hopes to get it posted on the Town website.

x. HOA update

Dave Schrumm updated that he has not heard back regarding the HOA list.

xi. Other Old Business

VII. NEW BUSINESS

i. Upcoming Walks with David Irvin (March 16, March 18)

Karen Schnitzer updated that they will need to pick new dates due to the rain.

ii. Staff Report/Council Liaison Report

Director Gawlak had no report.

iii. Map Vernal Pools

iv. Other New Business

VIII. NEXT MEETING

i. Next meeting date: April 8, 2026

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Karen Schnitzer motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Sean Henri seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed unanimously by those present. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Attest:

Noelle Shepard, Management Specialist