

East Providence Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes

September 19, 2023

City Hall - Room 308

6:30 P.M.

Members present: Wayne Barnes, James Boyd (Secretary), John Carney, Ernie Germani (Vice Chair), and Keith Gonsalves (Chair)

Members absent: Patrick Hanner, Kelsey Queenan and Jeremy Spurr

Public Attendees: Meg Robinson (Tree Commission) Jill Miller (Runnin's River Watershed Alliance)

A. Call to Order - Chair Keith Gonsalves called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

B. Review and Adoption of Meeting Minutes - The August 15, 2023 meeting minutes were approved on a motion by E. Germani and seconded by W. Barnes.

C. Public Comment: M. Robinson informed the Commission that the USDA Urban & Community Forest Program (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf>) grant application submitted by the City in collaboration with the Tree Commission was recently approved. The grant funding will provide \$1.53 million over 5 years to plant 1200 trees within the City. She also indicated that City Planner Johanna Walczak will hold a public open house on October 2 from 5-7 pm at the Weaver Library for a presentation on the urban forest study for the East Providence tree canopy.

D. Planning Department Update:

1. P. Hanner was unable to attend the Commission meeting and will provide an update at the next meeting.

E. Correspondence:

1. Email from Noreen Inglesi, Artist in Residence, dated September 13, 2023 .

F. New Business

1. Discussion with Jill Miller from the Runnin's River Watershed Alliance (RRWA). J. Miller provided the Commission with an overview of the RRWA mission and described its dedicated group of volunteers. The RRWA conducts several annual river cleanups along with numerous watershed hikes and environmental education. Additionally, the RRWA consults with various entities on river and watershed issues, and advocates for improved water quality throughout the watershed. Discussion revolved around ways in which the Commission and the RRWA can collaborate on matters of mutual interest.
2. Discussion of Army Corps Rumford Rifle Range planting plan; update and next steps. (Continued until next meeting)

3. Trail head Kiosks. P. Hanner sent an email to Commission members indicating that the trailhead kiosks for the Willett Pond, Turner Reservoir Loop, Boyden Heights Conservation Area and Hunt's Mills Trails will be shipped within the next few weeks. It was suggested that site visits be conducted with the Commission to determine best locations for the kiosks. The matter will be discussed at the next meeting.

G. Old Business

1. Options for repair of Boyden Heights Conservation Area wetland boardwalk. The Commission discussed the condition of the boardwalk and potential structural issues. It was concluded that the City Public Works Department/Parks Division would need to assess the conditions and develop any needed remedy.
2. Discussion of pedestrian link from the terminus of Redland Avenue at parcel 502-05-068.00, owned by the EP Water Department, to the Ten Mile River Bike Path. No further development in the matter beyond the City engaging with RIDOT on its bike path extension plans.
3. Runnins River stormwater management plan update. To be discussed at the next meeting.
4. Newman Avenue crossing trailhead. The Commission discussed a fall site investigation when foliage has dropped to improve sight line visibility for potential trail location options.

H. Other Business

1. September 14, 2023 field notes on water chestnut treatment at Central Pond. The Commission discussed the consultant's field notes and observations of treatment used to control the invasive aquatic plant. The report's before and after photographs of Central Pond treatment were dramatic.

I. Commission Member Items:

- M. Robinson (Tree Commission liaison) suggested that a wildflower, native prairie field seed mix should be considered for the large areas at the former Rumford Rifle Range that may not be planted with trees or shrubs in the current project site remediation planting plan.
- E. Germani noted that 16 folks attended the September 1 Coastal Coves walk as part of the RI Land Trust Days events. Another event hike is planned for the Turner Reservoir loop on September 24, meeting at Hunt's Mill at 09:00.
- J. Boyd advised the Commission that the Army Corps contractor will begin construction of the river bed alterations necessary to improve fish passage at the falls immediately below the fish ladder in October.
- K. Gonsalves suggested that the chain link fence surrounding the Boyden Heights Conservation Area parking area and immediate vicinity be removed and replaced with a lower fence, perhaps a split rail style for aesthetics.

J. Adjournment - The Commission adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

The next Conservation Commission meeting will be held on **Tuesday, October 17** at 6:30 p.m City Hall - Room 308.

Respectfully submitted,
James Boyd, Secretary