

**Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District**

**July 8, 2020
Meeting Transcription**

A regular meeting of the Land Use Committee of the Representative Policy Board of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District ("RWA") took place on Wednesday, June 10, 2020 via remote access. Chair Levine presided.

Present: Committee Members: P. Betkoski, P. DeSantis, B. Eitzer, R. Harvey, M. Horbal, M. Levine, G. Malloy, J. Oslander and J. Mowat Young
Authority: D. Borowy
Management: W. Henley, T. Norris, J. Tracy and J. Triana
RPB Staff: J. Slubowski

Mark:

All right. So, let's call the meeting to order. Can you open up the Safety Moment?

Jennifer:

You want to do the committee chair?

Mark:

No, I want to move the elect chair person to the end. Does anybody have a problem with that?

Greg:

No.

Mark:

Okay. So, we're going to do the Safety Moment. And the Safety Moment here are some tips for avoiding getting poison ivy rashes. I used to get poison ivy from just looking at it.

Greg:

Me too.

Mark:

I don't get it now. Do you get it now?

Greg:

Well if I touch it, yes I do.

Mark:

I haven't gotten it in years. Thank God.

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Mark:

Why doesn't everybody read that and we'll go from there. Jennifer, you can take that off now.

Mark:

The next agenda is the approval of the minutes.

Greg:

So moved.

Brian:

Second.

Mark:

All those in favor.

Group:

Aye

Mark:

Did you get a second there Jennifer?

Jennifer:

Yes, I did. Brian.

Mark:

All those in favor.

Group:

Aye

Mark:

I want you to know too. I should interject right here. I was forced to cancel the meeting. They held a gun to my head, and I said it's going to be sunny and it's going to be nice out. Nobody ever listens to me.

Jennifer:

It's not sunny here.

Mark:

Where are you, John? Are you at the site? No.

Will:

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It was raining at the site about 20 minutes ago, so maybe.

Mark:

John, you're home?

John:

I am home.

Mark:

All those in favor of approving the minutes.

Group:

Aye

Mark:

Minutes approved.

Mark:

Special topics. Furnace Pond harvesting. It's going to be hard to not see it. I would've loved to see it.

Will:

I believe most of you or some of you were at the meeting we had last year. We have been planning this harvest now for a couple years. The water chestnut, which is an invasive aquatic plant, has been present in Furnace Pond for we expect six or seven years. It's a pretty aggressive plant. It shades out all the light. Native plants can't grow where the plant grows.

Will:

When the plant dies off, all that biomass goes back into the lake. It has an overall negative impact on bodies of water, but our primary concern is not having this spread into Lake Saltonstall, which is a source of supply for the water company, and it would obviously have impacts on the water quality there as well as the recreational program.

Will:

Last year, we attempted to get a contractor to do the harvest. They didn't meet our safety requirements, so the project didn't go through. We got a larger company this year that was able to satisfy the safety and insurance requirements, and they're out there harvesting the water chestnut now.

Will:

The water chestnut produces a fruit that looks like this. It sits in the sediments. Each plant can produce 10 of those a year, so it can multiply 10 times. So, it's a pretty fast growing plant that can spread pretty rapidly.

Will:

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This is a project that is going to take a number of years, as there is a large number of these fruiting bodies in the sediments.

Will:

I think someone mentioned earlier that there seems like there's more of it this year. One thought on that is that around this time last year we had maybe eight and a half acres of it. The pond was also fuller, so we're about one foot down now in Furnace Pond. The plant has a very strict depth growth profile, so it can only grow in a certain amount of water. It needs the light. So, now that there's less water in the pond there's a little bit more of it because it can grow.

Mark:

All that green area where it's solid, that's all...

Will:

That is all very dense growth. We're not meeting there in the field, but if anyone is driving by Route One in Branford, you can see it from the road pretty easily.

Mark:

I was just going to ask, John. How long are they going to be there, do you know?

Will:

They are supposed to be there until the end of Friday, next week.

Mark:

Next Friday? Until next Friday?

Will:

Correct.

Mark:

Are those gates open there? That we can pull in.

Will:

No, the gates aren't open, but you can see it from the road very easily.

Mark:

You pull over to the side there? Is it possible?

Will:

I wouldn't do that, no. You'd have to ask John about access, but you can see it from across the street. There's a plaza. You can see it from the Saltonstall gate before you actually go in through the treatment plant gate.

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Mark:

That's like going up the hill, so you can see that, right?

Will:

Yeah. So, they're going to be out there. They've already collected a significant amount of material. Josh and I had a conversation about how to describe how much material it is. I would say if you picture a school bus or two school buses, maybe that volume of material they've removed already.

Mark:

In a pile. You mean in a pile?

Will:

A pile, yeah. So, they've gotten maybe I would estimate about an acre, and they've worked almost two full days. They started yesterday at 9:00 o'clock. They put the machine in. It's a large paddle wheel machine with the conveyor belt on the front and a harvesting mechanism. They bring the material up on shore, and then our guys bring it up into the woods where it can decompose.

Mark:

They dump it off shore and then we take it with a pay loader?

Will:

Correct.

Mark:

Is that area there, the dense one. Are they in that area now?

Will:

That's correct. They are starting with the densest area because this is the first year. The important part is just to get the plants before they produce the fruit. The more seeds you have in the lake, the longer it's going to take to remove all of it.

Mark:

They haven't gone to seed yet?

Will:

They have not gone to seed yet. So, the point of the harvest is to get it before they go to seed, and because it's the first year the important part is just to get as much of the material as possible. There's no point in paying to chase around the little pieces until we get farther along in the process.

Will:

Another point of note is that we've been inspecting Lake Saltonstall for the last three years, removing any material we find in Lake Saltonstall. There was some very small [crosstalk 00:06:47] in Lake Saltonstall about three years ago. Last year, there was just some at the very southern end. This year, I

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only found five plants. So, we have good control there, and the plant's not really spreading into Saltonstall which is what our primary...

Mark:

Did you take those out? Were they removed?

Will:

Correct. Yes.

Mark:

By this machine or did you do it yourself?

Will:

You can just pull them out.

Mark:

What's the cost of something like this? This machine there.

Will:

The machine is over \$100,000, but the contractor was obviously cheaper than that.

Mark:

I'm just saying. What does it cost for him to do this?

Will:

I believe it was about \$20,000.

Mark:

Are we going to do it again next year?

Will:

That would be the goal, yes.

Mark:

Sounds like a plan. I wish I could've seen it.

Will:

Josh I think wanted to talk a little bit about... We did some mapping as well.

Josh:

Earlier this year as you guys know we became drone certified, three members of the team. So, we put in to get a waiver from FAA to be able to fly the drone over this harvest which is within Tweed's class G

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airspace, so you have to get a waiver in order to fly the drone. They approved us for a full month of flight, so the whole month of July we can fly the drone. Just before the harvest this past Monday, we did a flight and mapped the current population of the water chestnut.

Mark:

Are you recording that to? Or is it like a photo or like a movie?

Josh:

Basically, the program we're using, we can draw a grid pattern over the population and every two seconds it takes an image. I think we took maybe 270 pictures over the population, and when we put that into a program it stitches all those images together to create almost like what you would see on Google Maps, but 160 feet over the population.

Mark:

Is it possible to see a video of this?

Josh:

No. We just took it on Monday. John Hudak is still processing the information.

Mark:

Our next meeting, can we see it? Do you think?

Josh:

Next meeting we should have at least the beginning map done, and once the harvest is over we will be doing another session. And because of this program we're using, it will take an image at the exact same points as the previous flight, so you will get a perfect side-by-side comparison of the before and after of the harvest.

Mark:

I think maybe RPB should see this movie. I mean it's up to you guys, but I think it would be a good idea.

Brian:

[inaudible 00:09:28] before and after it's done I would say. Wait at least until then.

Mark:

What did you say?

Brian:

Wait at least until before and after it's done before [inaudible 00:09:41].

Josh:

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And we will be taking an actual video of the harvester working, driving through the population. Potentially have Will and I out there doing some hand-pulling. So, we should be able to come up with a nice presentation at the finish of this harvest.

Mark:

What do you think? September meeting?

Josh:

Yeah, all of this will definitely be done by September.

Mark:

If you can do it for August, that'd be cool too. I think it would be interesting. And then maybe show it to the RPB because this is a very interesting subject. Does anybody have any objections to that?

Mike:

I think this is interesting too. This is Mike Horbal. I think this is interesting too. And I assume you are using lidar technology. Is that correct?

Josh:

It's not lidar. We're just using a normal red, green, blue camera. The drones that can carry a lidar unit are well above our pay grade to purchase, but John Hudak is actually experimenting a lot with sentinel data which is using basically lidar from satellites to be able to do a lot of this mapping. We're kind of experimenting to see what gives us the best pictures, what seems to be the most cost effective way to map this. With the sentinel data, you don't have to go out to fly the drone to get the images, but with the drone we can actually get images from 160 feet above the water, and you can zoom in really close and you get crystal clear 1080P to 4K video from the drone. It's a give and take in that respect, but we are experimenting with lidar as well.

Mark:

I hope as soon as you get something that's worth seeing you bring it to our committee and maybe we'll show it to the RPB.

Josh:

Absolutely.

John:

Josh, do you have the stills that John forwarded the other day? From Monday?

Josh:

The stills.

John:

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Because I have four of them. After you and Will are done, then I could have Jennifer let me share my screen and they can see some of the stilled photographs that were taken on Monday.

Josh:

OK. Yeah, you can do that. I have not seen those yet.

Mike:

And I would like to get some idea of the cost of you to do this type of photography or drone photography.

Josh:

We've already purchased the drone, so that can be used infinite times. The only cost would be in the program that we use to process. And right now we're using a program that you submit the images, and you pay a certain fee based on how many images you have. It could just be \$7.00, \$10.00 for a particular set of pictures to do it and you kind of do it a la carte. In the future, we would like to get a license with Pix4D, which you get a license for. You can get an unlimited subscription for roughly four or \$5,000.00 and that gives you unlimited access to take as many videos as you want. You can do 40, 50 acres and you're only limited to how much battery life you have on the drone to start mapping all of this stuff. And like I said, once you have that program and once you have that license, you have it indefinitely.

Mark:

How is flying that drone? Are you getting good at it?

Josh:

Oh yeah. It's a lot of fun. With this program we're using, you set the path, you let it go, and if you wanted to you can sit in the lawn chair and drink a mojito while it's going. Of course, you don't. You want to keep-

Mark:

You don't wanna be out of a job.

Josh:

The big thing to worry about even if you're letting it go by itself is watching out for hawks, ospreys. They find drones a threat, so you want to make sure that if something is flying nearby you're keeping an eye on it. We've already had one instance where the motion sensors went off on the drone because a hawk came very close. So, you just have to be very cautious in that respect. Otherwise, taking the actual images is very simple and you can get really high quality footage.

Brian:

I think it's a very good thing [inaudible 00:14:30] program. You find it useful not just for the lake, but a lot of sorts of things. I think that's the way to go.

Mark:

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On the invasive plants on land too [inaudible 00:14:40]

Josh:

Absolutely.

Greg:

What's the cost of a drone?

Josh:

With all the bells and whistles, and by bells and whistles I mean the landing pad, extra batteries, a case and that sort of thing, it came out to right around \$2000. And it folds up to about like maybe six by twelve block. Basically something you can fit inside your backpack or inside a fanny pack. Very mobile. And obviously it goes up exponentially. You can get like I said lidar cameras and things that can hold 30 or 40 pounds on them that costs in the 10s and \$20,000 range, but for just using a normal red, blue, green camera, something like this is perfect.

Greg:

Cool. Thank you.

Mark:

Anybody have anything else to ask Josh?

Mark:

I can't wait to see the video then.

Josh:

Me too.

Mark:

Thanks a lot.

Josh:

Thanks guys.

Greg:

Thank you, Josh.

Josh:

Thank you, guys.

Mark:

That was very interesting. Too bad we're not there to see it.

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Mark:

Jennifer is it raining there? Hello Jennifer?

Jennifer:

It's drizzling out.

Mark:

Yeah sure.

Jennifer:

It is. It's not sunny here.

Greg:

It looks like sun coming through your windows.

Mark:

It looks awful bright there.

Mark:

Updates on land we need and RWA properties including invasive species update. John?

Brian:

[inaudible 00:16:17].

Mark:

I can't hear you. You're not coming through good.

Brian:

[inaudible 00:16:24].

Mark:

We're having trouble with your audio.

Greg:

I can't hear.

Jennifer:

He wanted to see a photo.

Mark:

Oh yeah. Cool.

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John:

So, if Jennifer could give me the power to put up my screen here.

Jennifer:

I think you should.

John:

If I could figure this out.

Jennifer:

Try that.

John:

This is a picture that is over Furnace Pond looking towards the south. You see Route One in the foreground, and all the green swath that you see next to the black is the water chestnut that's on top of the water.

Mark:

Wow.

John:

Now, this is same vantage point more or less from over the pond looking towards the water treatment plant. In the foreground, you can see small colonies of the plant that are up near the shore. As Will was mentioning, these plants need a certain water depth for them to really live, so they won't be found in all water bodies. They got to have the right depth.

John:

Now, this is taken from about the same location I would say as the first photograph but turned looking east now towards the back eastern bay. And you can see it's almost chock solid with the water chestnut. A little hole in the middle, so maybe that means it's a little deeper in that one spot, but it's pretty thick.

John:

And this one is also looking that way. The drone has moved a little farther to the north, and you're looking almost like due east at this point. The road that's in the distance is Route ne going into the horizon is towards the east. You're looking at eastern bay and all this green patch that you see is completely water chestnut. So, that's some of the still images that we have of the drone flight from Monday.

Mark:

John, how much has that grown in all the years that you've been around would you say?

John:

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I think Will or Josh might be able to answer the question better because they and John Hudak have looked at a series of aerial photographs to see... Because you can make it out in an aerial photograph. Do you guys have any answer to that question?

Will:

Because they don't collect aerial photography every year, it started growing sometime between 2010 and 2012 is the estimate. Last time we had this meeting I did have - I'll see if I can find it - an array of photos showing the growth. It grows really explosively.

Mark:

What started it? Did something contaminate the water there and brought it in?

Will:

It was only one plant. The seeds have little spikes and burrs on them that can attach to birds. They can also be in people's fish tanks, and they dump them out into water bodies. They can come from a number of different places.

Peter:

Hey Will. What do they do with this when they clean them out? Do they truck them away? How do we know they're far enough away so they don't come back?

Will:

We're putting them up hill in a clearing that we have near the pond. There's a lot of biomass to the plants. They have a surface leaf and then they have a leaf below that that's underwater, and they have a big root system, but once they dry out there's really not much there. It's mostly water. Right now, there's huge piles of it, but when it dries out it'll be no more.

Mark:

Peter, last year we went out and we saw the clearing they had in May for the company that was going to do it. They cleared an area for it, so it's up about what do you say? 500 feet from the pond maybe? Quarter mile?

Jamie:

Just by those railroad tracks. Was it just above the railroad?

Mark:

Yeah.

Will:

It's right at the peak of the hill there.

Mark:

Very good. John, that was excellent. Thank you.

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John:

Thank you.

Brian:

[inaudible 00:20:44].

Mark:

What did you say?

Jamie:

Brian, stay a little farther from your computer. Brian, if you can hear me just back up a little from your computer. Your voice is getting... We can hear you better when you're further away.

Brian:

[inaudible 00:21:04]. I have to get a headset for this thing.

Mark:

Yeah, you do better when you turn your head to the right. There.

Mark:

Did you ask a question? Did you ask a question?

Brian:

I was just commenting on how [inaudible 00:21:29] the photos are from that drone. Beautiful photos.

Mark:

Yeah for sure. Good investment. OK, John you're up.

John:

Jennifer has on the screen the update for June. You can see here is the percent storage for the surface water system. We're at 90%; last year, we were at 99, so it's much wetter spring and the long term average is 88, so we're still ahead of what the long-term average is. We're in good shape. And both are going to be trending downward as we normally see it during the summertime.

John:

For the month of June, it was a little drier than normal and about half as much water as we typically see from the clouds during a June.

John:

Land we need for the water reuse program. We only talked to one property owner in Cheshire, 40 acres. DePodesta and Hendrickson properties in Hamden and Bethany executed the documents for the Hendrickson property and sent them to DEEP, so we are ready to receive that check whenever it comes

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in. I have not heard back from them about what the timing is for the DePodesta documents and all the paperwork there, but it should be coming soon because they really should be in lockstep with each other.

John:

The Beers property is a property in northern Hamden, Mount Carmel area next to Brooksville Park. And we sent another letter of support for the Hamden Land Trust to the Hamden Town Council, so that the town would buy the property. They actually already have an ASLA grant in line to buy it, but they just didn't have the rest of the money, so the town council had to authorize that. From what I understand, they did in fact vote to buy the property and get the money in line for that.

John:

Rental houses. Rimmon Road. We had our bid opening. We had two bids, and the winning bid was \$67,000. We've talked to Murtha about contacting the attorney which has already occurred, and we're getting ready to sign the purchase and sale agreement within the next couple weeks. And if everything else times out, then we expect to have a closing some time probably right after Labor Day.

Mark:

Is that the group with the people from Seymour? Or near there?

John:

I believe the people that you are talking about are the same ones who did win. They're not from Seymour; they're from the Valley area. I believe they rented an apartment in Sonia right now.

Mark:

They seemed like nice people.

John:

And they are very anxious and very excited to be able to own a house in Seymour state. They both have rooms in the Valley, so they are very happy to have won the bid.

Mark:

Excellent.

John:

Hamden. Ives St. and Skiff St. The zone change application for 233 Skiff St. was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission of Hamden. And we also repaired the roof there because it had a large opening in it.

John:

Forestry update. Actually, nothing happened in the last month or a couple of months. All forestry timber sales have come to a grinding halt as the world timber markets have stopped. Everything's come to a halt due to COVID.

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John:

The other things that Alex has been working on including the final report and receiving the final report from UConn researchers who are using drone technology to map out basic lands. He has also inventoried parts of our forest in Seymour and Madison.

John:

The tree that was blocking the trail along the West River. This is actually kind of an interesting story. He did it, we posted information about it on our Facebook page, and then somebody from the West River - I forget the exact title of the group; the West River coalition or something - saw that it had been done and said that she was very thankful for a mystery saw, sawyer I guess you would say and didn't know who had done it. There was an article in an online paper, and Dan Doyle from our communications department caught this and solved the mystery very quickly for the reporter, so that all turned out to be even more good press for us which we're happy to see.

Mark:

Alex did that. Put a step in a tree trunk, right?

John:

That is correct.

Mark:

Beautiful job.

John:

Absolutely. And both Alex and Josh participated in a new segment on ticks and barberry. That was picked up by multiple TV stations. And Alex also met with Jeff Ward from the Agricultural Experiment Station at two sites in Seymour/Madison for looking at experimental deer fencing (slash walls) to prevent deer rousing and damage in timber harvest areas.

John:

Recreation. The good news kept coming, not as insanely great as it was in May where it was all time records for all time months, but we still had another tremendous June. The biggest June that we've ever had. Had over 630-something permits that were bought, and I think it was about 400 of those were new permittees and 200 were renewals, so our total now stands at 5,435.

John:

The billboard campaign ended in May, but the bill insert started on June 8th, so we're still doing the coupon until August 21st.

John:

COVID restrictions, as we've gotten into the new phases of the reopening, we have seen fewer people out there which is also typical for our properties as we get into the hotter more humid and bugger months, but we're still definitely seeing more people than we have in the past.

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John:

We've worked on a plan. Jeff is executing it actually right now, a plan to reopen the boating at Lake Saltonstall. The boat dock was already installed by the end of June, and this week he has been working with the three new hires in order to get the boats down to Saltonstall so that we can be ready to put the boats and start the program next Tuesday, the 14th. This is all to Jeff's credit. He put together a whole procedure for the staff to go through, so that it's completely safe not only for us but also for our permittees.

John:

Recreation staff continue to station during the evenings at Saltonstall and Maltby during the month of June because we have seen higher numbers there too. And then we've also taken the guy who was supposed to be doing Maltby. Once in a while, he'll go over to Chamberlain and set up the table at Lake Chamberlain and that has worked out very well. We've gotten many good compliments from the permit holders saying that they like seeing a checkpoint there to make sure that people are following the rules and aren't trespassing, aren't bringing in dogs, et cetera.

John:

We did revoke the permits for two people who verbally abused one of our staff at Maltby who was there manning the lake on one of these evening shifts. By the end of the month, we had been in contact with one of them, who was appealing to be reinstated, and we had reinstated her. This actually was a father and daughter combination. It was really the dad who was the instigator. The daughter was just kind of there caught in the middle. And we did afford some leniency, and she was very apologetic in the letter. We talked to Max who was the staff member there. He accepted the apology. We accepted the apology, and we said, "You're good to go. You can come back." So, she was very appreciative of our understanding of the matter.

Greg:

Hey John. Why did they verbally abuse him?

John:

I was not there, but what happened is that this gentleman drove in with a pickup truck with a canoe on the top of it. It seemed like he was going to start taking the canoe and put it into the water. Max said something to him to just say, "Hey, you know, just to let you know you can't put canoes in the water." And then he started flipping on Max and saying that he could do what he wants; he's put the boat in the water at Saltonstall before. He was dropping f-bombs and s-bombs and everything else. And the daughter was just there to meet him. She doesn't live with him. He's an older gentleman. And she was just going to meet him to go fishing and she kind of got caught in the middle of trying to protect her dad and all that. But it was really the father who instigated it and kept at it too. He kept walking from the lake back to the truck and saying things to Max as he was going back and forth. So, he didn't just have an altercation and then let it die. He kind of kept stirring the pot for the entire time that he was there. And he's gone.

Mark:

Did he call the police?

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John:

We're not gonna have him back.

Mark:

They call the police?

John:

No, we did not. Max handled it himself, but we told the police all about this afterwards, so that they were aware.

Greg:

Where was the guy from? What town?

John:

She's from I believe West Haven. I think he's from-

Mark:

Those West type of people are mean.

John:

Well, I think he's from East Haven if record serves.

Greg:

That's actually where Jennifer is from.

Mike:

Is it raining in East Haven Jennifer?

Jennifer:

It's still drizzling out.

John:

So, in addition for recreation stuff. We've reblazed and cleared trails at Chamberlain, Hammonasset, and Genessee.

John:

Good weather. We've been out there. Trying to help people make the place look better. And also Josh has been doing some of this too; as he goes, he's also clearing the invasives as well as just clearing the trail.

John:

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We had two Land Use Plan amendments as you know. You approved them at the June meeting for the relocation of the Quinnipiac trail in Prospect of creating the new trail that comes off of the Harrison Preserve, North Branford.

John:

License agreements were sent to both entities who we're working with. CFBA and the North Branford Land Trust. And invoices were also mailed out to both of them.

John:

Special activity permits. Now that I think some of the restrictions have been lifted, we've had a little flurry of special activity permits come in to Linda last month.

John:

And other items. Looking down page. Encroachments and agreements for the agricultural fields. We signed an agreement with a gentleman named Tanev to hay all of the fields in Prospect, Bethany, and Woodbridge. Both parties have signed the agreement, but I don't have a certificate of insurance yet, so it's not official. And I can't let him go until I get the COI. By month's end, we were waiting for the COI.

John:

And then I discussed other fields with two other potential farmers. That all happened in June as well. Those fields were on the eastern side of the system.

John:

I have been catching up on all the encroachments that myself and my staff have found during the spring. And so I sent out a total of six different letters to people in Bethany, Hamden, North Branford, and Seymour for various encroachments. Two of them were pretty egregious in that Alex and I had just marked those boundaries within the last year or two. The one in Hamden I did myself and it was fine boundary at the time, and then Trevor had to go out for a hazard street call to a neighboring property. And he noticed that the people at 4061 Whitney Avenue had basically put up a batting cage. He cleared about a few hundred square feet on our property, and then put up a batting cage, a chipping/putting area all within a year. Because when I went through there I could barely walk through it, it was so dense. And he said, "Oh, it's not dense anymore." He showed me some pictures of it. It was not that way when I was out there. So, all those went out in the last month of June.

John:

I also signed the annual agreement with Bethany Horsemen to do the horses around Lake Chamberlain.

John:

The people at Hamden and by Servoss St. We remarked the boundary there and repaired the fence because there was a lot of people who were trespassing on the property that goes down to Lake Whitney. There's a small property owned by the Hamden Land Trust there. A little tiny trail, but people were then going through a break in our fence, going down to Whitney to sight see, to fish, to try to get pictures of a Heron Rookery that's in the trees there and they were disturbing the birds. So, we redid the

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boundary and we repaired the fence so everything's been fine since the time that we repaired around mid-June.

Jamie:

I'm sorry to interrupt. But with the property we're talking about on Whitney Ave where they cleared it for the batting cage, do we get reparation for that? How do you handle that?

John:

Well in this case, it was a lot of slash and just downed trees that they cleared. They didn't take down any major trees. And like I said, it was maybe 100 to 200 square feet. The letter that I sent to them... and the letters vary by the intensity, the use that they used, and also the nature of it because if it's it could be detrimental to the water supply. In this case, we have no intention of allowing them to keep that as a batting cage. So, what I said to them is that, "If you just remove everything, you're fine. You're going to be in a good stance with us; however, I just want to let you know that if you want to fight this, we can bring this up and bring damages to three or five times the amount of the wood that was removed or cut down." In this case, it wasn't a whole lot. They responded immediately, and they removed everything immediately. So, we're good.

John:

If things were much bigger and they took down trees for a bigger swath or let's say they took down trees in a wetland or on a steep slope that went down towards a river, that is a more serious issue here than what we have in this instance. This was just a little flat area behind their house, and it was a lot of downed trees already, so they corrected the matter right away. And we're good with it.

Greg:

Will you have to check on that periodically?

John:

Yes. After they sent the email and said everything was OK, then I instructed Trevor who went out there and made the report about the encroachment and took all the photographs. I don't know if he's gone out yet, but he's going to go out and verify that everything is gone so that we're in good stead with them, and we could put the matter to bed for the time being. But we will probably be out there again in another year or two just to make sure that everything is as we expect it to be.

Mike:

I have a question.

John:

Go ahead, Mike.

Mike:

So, they cleared this area that had the batting cage. During that time that they used it, if somebody gets injured who, is responsible? Is the water company liable?

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John:

That's an attorney question. I would think that we would not be liable because they are trespassing on our property, but you never know what an attorney may claim, so I'd have to kick that over to the attorneys. We haven't had that happen yet, so I don't have an answer to the question.

Mike:

And in my experience in dealing with these kind of things in the past, it's important that the water company sends these encroachers this letter to get them off your property to cover their tail.

John:

Yes. So, whenever we see something of this nature, then we have to act on it as soon as possible. The private property owners can not bring a claim against us for adverse possession because we are a political subdivision of the state. However, the longer you let something go, the more issues you're going to have in the long run, so we tried to act expeditiously on all these matters.

Joe:

John. A slightly different question. I'm dealing with someone asking what months are the bike trails open on regional water authority land?

John:

The bike trails are open on our property all months except for the mud season, so I'd have to check with Jeff, but I think what our typical moratorium on bikes is from, I want to say March 1st to April 15th. That is my recollection on that. I can double check with him and get you an answer to be sure, but I believe the mud season as we define it and as we have for our moratorium is March 1 to April 15.

Joe:

OK, thank you.

Mark:

Invasive plants.

John:

So, we're down to invasive plants. Josh has been out there many days at Saltonstall ridge mostly cutting ailanthus, but he gets other things as he sees it. And cutting invasives in places in Bethany, Woodbridge, Hamden, and East Haven.

John:

We installed a metal mesh like a hardware cloth at Davis St. as an experiment to reduce the amount of knotweed that's growing near the sidewalk there. He also did another experiment over by the West River Water Treatment Plant, and this is a technique that was mentioned online and we figured, "Well, we're going to give it a shot and see what happens with it." So, in the last month Josh mapped 10 acres and treated about two acres.

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John:

In the last month also. ATV's and dirt bikes. We continue to work with land trusts-- regarding ATV's and dirt bike trespassers. It actually got a lot quieter out there once we got into the middle of June, and it's been pretty quiet since. Again, that's the typical pattern.

John:

Deer hunt. The deadline for the applications was June 20th. There were 184 applicants for 205 spots. So, we won't need to run a lottery for that. Everyone should get a spot although not necessarily the location that they had requested.

John:

Simon property dam. This is the property owner that's on the west side of Downs Rd in Bethany just over the Woodbridge line, and they have a much larger than I had pictured in my mind... large dam that is all stone and dates from about 1860 something, I think it was. So, we met with the owners there and to discuss how we operate Lake Bethany and the water system because they are planning to do work on their dam. It was a very good meeting, very educational. Interesting for me to see the dam. I had always heard about this thing, but I never imagined that it was as big as it is.

John:

And then just a little anecdotal story here. We get a lot of strange requests that come into us via the ask info emails. This one gentleman from Massachusetts said that he grew up in Milford and he lived on Tower St. there. He had a vague recollection of a water tank on that street. He said it was called Tower for a reason, right? But he couldn't find anyone to substantiate his memory. So, he called Town Hall and nobody in Town Hall knew what he was talking about. So then he actually emailed the ask billing email address, and then it got routed to me. I did some digging. I found that there definitely was a water tank there. It even had a picture from 1913, and it was in aerial photographs from 1934, 1965. I could tell that we sold the property. I think it was eventually sold in like 1999, although we started the disposition of it by 1987. And I could also see that by 1987 the tank itself was removed from service; it probably came less of a need for it and it became sort of obsolete once we installed the Ford St. tanks, which occurred I think in the late 60s or early 70s. So, that's all that report.

John:

There's a couple of articles in here for your reading pleasure, and I'll be happy to answer any questions you have.

Mark:

Thanks John. Anybody have any questions?

Greg:

Hey John. How much water did we get last week from all that rain?

John:

In summer, the rains that we get are very sporadic; they vary greatly depending on where you are because of the nature of summer thunderstorms. So, depending on where you are you could have seen

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two inches of rain or you could have seen a half an inch of rain. It's quite variable. But most of the systems saw over an inch of rain. Some double that.

Mark:

Anybody else?

Mark:

OK. You know I cannot run for chairman again. Anybody? I had one phone call from a person who was interested in being chairman. Does anybody have any nominations they would like to make?

Greg:

I'd like to nominate Peter Betkoski.

Mark:

Peter is that OK with you?

Peter:

That's OK. I appreciate that.

Mark:

Bob Harvey?

Bob:

Bob Harvey. I will second that.

Mark:

Thank you. I already spoke to Peter that he would have to be on time to the meetings.

Peter:

I'll be on time.

Greg:

It's a must.

Peter:

Yes I understand.

Mark:

Any other nominations? Any other nominations? Any other nominations? All those in favor of Peter Betkoski being elected chairman for the Land Use Committee for the year say "Aye."

Group:

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Aye.

Mark:

Anybody against?

Mark:

OK Peter. You're the new chairman! Do you want me to do the report at the next meeting of the RPB?

Peter:

You could, yeah. I was going to touch base with you and Jennifer to get my feet wet to move forward, so yeah that would work, Mark.

Mark:

Be nice to Jennifer because she's the one who takes care of you.

Jennifer:

It's nice and sunny out here.

Mark:

Jennifer.

Peter:

Greg. Thank you for your nomination, Greg and Bob.

Greg:

You're welcome.

Jamie:

I was going to say, Mark. This is just completing my first year on the board but also on this committee, and you've been a tremendous chairman and a great mentor, so thank you for your leadership for this and the previous years as well.

Mark:

Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Greg:

Yeah, Mark. I want you to thank you for a job well done.

Mark:

It's been three years I've been doing it.

Peter:

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Great job, Mark. Mark, thank you so much. Tough shoes to fill.

Mark:

I'll be back. I'll be back.

Mike:

Mark, I want to say this here. I'm a new member, and I have learned an awful lot from you and I appreciate that.

Mark:

Thanks.

Mike:

You have my confidence, so I thank you so much for your help.

Mark:

I appreciate all the comments. You're going to make me cry.

Mark:

Thank you very much. Anything else to cover for the meeting? Our next meeting August 12th, and they might have that video for us.

Greg:

Great.

Jamie:

Is this Ted's last meeting or are you with us for a little bit longer, Ted?

Mark:

Yeah, Ted's here until December. Right, Ted?

Ted:

Correct.

Jamie:

OK awesome.

Mark:

Ted's here in December. I can't believe you're retiring Ted.

Ted:

30 years.

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Mark:

You're such a young guy. What are you gonna do? Drive a school bus?

Mark:

Take it easy guys. Thank you very much.