

**Equine Advisory Council Meeting**  
Meeting Minutes of May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Attending:

Amy Stegall, Ruth Beardsley, Meredith Berger, Gail Kosakowski,  
Meg Sautter, Jan Collins, Diane Ciano, Judy Beliveau

Called To Order:

The meeting was held at the Northeast Utilities Building in Berlin, CT. Amy Stegall called the meeting to order at 7:16 PM.

Agenda:

Introductions  
Ground Rules  
Trail Issues  
Meeting Times/Frequency

Introductions:

Each appointed Council Member took the opportunity to introduce themselves including which Districts they represent.

**Amy Stegall**, Stafford Springs – CHC President

**Meg Sautter**, Newington / District #1 - **John B. Larson (D)**

CHC-VHP Supervisor, horse owner, MBLA Member, avid trail rider throughout the State of Connecticut.

**Ruth Beardsley**, Bethany / District #3 - **Rosa L. DeLauro (D)**

CDCTA President, Attorney, horse owner and Bethany Zoning Board of Appeals member. She is also the Stewardship Chair of the Bethany Land Trust, and a member of the Bethany Horsemen, and Bethany Park & Rec. Department.

**Gail Kosakowski**, Oxford / District # 4 - **Christopher Shays (R)**

Oxford Horse & Livestock Assn. President, horse owner, some trail experience at the Larkin Bridle Trail, Huntington S.P

**Meredith Berger**, Cheshire / District #5 - **Nancy Johnson (R)**

Paralegal; currently leasing a horse for her daughter.

Also in attendance:

**Diane Ciano**, Plymouth

CHC Trails Committee Chairperson, CHC Board member, and CHC-VHP Supervisor, horse owner, avid trail rider throughout the State of CT. She is a gubernatorial appointment to the CT Greenways Council. Diane serves as the CHC equestrian representative on the DEP Recreational Trails Advisory Board. She represents the equestrian community on the CT Forestlands Council (CFC) as a member of Recreation Committee. Previously, she served as Chairman of the CFC 's Planning & Policy Committee. Diane is a member of the CT Forest & Park Association.

Diane has volunteered her time and services representing the equestrian community for the past 15 years.

**Jan Collins**, Somers / District #2- **Rob Simmons (R)**

CHC-VHP Member she patrols in the Shenipsit State Forest in Somers, Ellington, and Stafford. She also rides in the Nipmuck State Forest in Stafford and Union. She is a member of the Scantic River Watershed Association where we have gained Greenway recognition and a \$5000 Greenway Grant to develop multi-use trails in the Scantic River State Park in Somers and Enfield.

Jan is on the Somers Planning Commission's Open Space and Trails Subcommittee, where they review new development applications for possible inclusion of trails in their Open Space obligations and help maintain Town and Northern Connecticut Land Trust trails in Somers.

She is also a member of the CT Forestlands Council's Recreation Committee.

**Judy Beliveau**, Oxford, Acting Recording Secretary

CHC-VHP Member, horse owner, and Connecticut trails rider.

She is also a member of the Newtown Bridle Lands Association (NBLA) and Southbury Horse & Livestock Association (SHLA) and the Oxford Land Trust (OLT).

We are still waiting on two appointments to complete this Equine Advisory Council from:

**Senator McKinney**. This appointment is for a CT Forest & Park Association (CFPA) member who is an equestrian. CHC President Amy and Representative Debra Hovey; recommended that Diane Ciano, a member of CFPA be appointed to this position.

**Senator** \_\_\_\_\_ This appointment is for District #2.

CHC President Amy and Representative Debra Hovey; recommended that **Jan Collins**, Somers be placed at this as a representative of this appointed seat.

**Council Chairperson:**

Ruth Beardsley nominated Amy Stegall as Chairperson for the Equine Advisory Council, Jan Collins seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

**Possible Resources Available:**

Amy Stegall noted that since this council is a governmentally created council, that it too should have the same resources available as other Advisory Councils within the State of Conn. I.e. Getting legal opinions from the office of The Attorney General, and the office of Legal Research. Funding may also be available, but further review would be necessary.

**Review of Existing Trails and Issues on State Land:**

Diane Ciano; reported that DEP asked that the equestrian community evaluate "Horse Accessible Trails" throughout the State within DEP jurisdiction. She noted that this is an ongoing project. Reports of the areas around the state that have been evaluated to date have been sent to the various DEP area supervisors (21) as well as to officials in Hartford. She will compile and present her findings to date and report this to the Council.

**Topic of Blue Blaze Trails:**

It was noted that Connecticut Forest and Parks Association (CFPA) is a private organization, not Governmental. The organization maintains over 700 miles of blue-blazed trails in the state, both on state, public and private lands. CFPA maintains that the "blue blazed" trails to be "Hiking Trails Only", which means no horses; or bikers allowed on any of these trails marked throughout State Land.

Diane reported that there is a direct conflict with many of the blue-blazed hiking trails on state land, as many sections are on old abandoned roads, old woods roads, and prior existing trails that were historically used by equestrians. She reports that this is a 20 year old issue with DEP & CFPA that has never been resolved, although there has been much discussion and debate over the fact that many of these trails are equestrian accessible; and alternate routes can be created to avoid inaccessible or sensitive areas.

Amy mentioned that The Council may be able to have a "Prior to Marking" stipulation regarding the application of the "blue blaze". It appears to be that in the past, no other user group was informed of any trails being designated strictly as "Blue Blaze", and it was noted that this should change as CFPA & DEP has made it impossible to use connecting trails to get from one State Property to the adjoining State Property. Diane reported that recently DEP refused to grant a one time usage request from an out of state organization that had planned an 8 day trail ride in CT. They wanted to utilize sections of the blue-blazed trail system, as the surface conditions were more appropriate and safe for equestrian passage to connect to other trail systems within the forest.

**Larkin Trail:**

Diane had brought to the table the issue of DEP changing the name of the Larkin State Bridle Trail when it was designated as a CT Greenway. This has upset the equestrian community, because the DEP took the word "Bridle" out of the name and

is now called the Larkin State Park Greenway. Equestrians have been very proud of the trail originally designated as the only state bridle trail and its historic use and have asked that the name be changed back to its original name.

Diane also noted that the trail crosses many roads in 4 towns and is a well used trail for all user groups, including people walking with baby carriages. These roads are narrow, with limited sight lines and fast traveled. For safety reasons, she recommends that members of the Council work with the various towns that the trail passes through in getting crosswalks and signage up at all crossings.

**Centennial Forest:**

Diane raised questions about the state's \$90 million dollar purchase of these lands (Kelda) and the denied equestrian and mountain bike access to them. Signs posted on the property name DEP as well as private organizations: Aquarion Water Company, The Nature Conservancy and CT Forest & Park Association. Diane reported a recent situation that developed with equestrian access to a section of the forest that would give Newtown resident's access to the abutting multiple use Huntington State Park. After much discussion, the Council Members felt more information is needed to be gathered. Ruth Beardsley offered to attain a copy of the Deed and Public Hearing Records for the properties in question. Amy asked Judy if she could gather more information on the outcome of a meeting with officials from the Aquarion Water Company and members of the Newtown Bridle Lands Association (NBLA). Judy will contact NBLA President, Carol Bussey, on the Council's behalf.

**Purpose and Goals:**

Diane suggested that this council work on a Mission Statement, stating its Purpose and Goals. She also suggested that a report of this information gathering session be presented to the DEP as well as to the legislators that have appointed the Council members and CFPA. Diane was also asked to compile a list of issues regarding past communication with DEP and goals the Council can work on to better communicate with DEP on trail issues for Council members to review and discuss.

NOTE: This list has been attached as an addendum to the meeting notes.

**Next Meeting:**

Amy agreed that more information needs to be gathered in the preparation of a Mission Statement, and that a next meeting may not be necessary as email can be the primary way of Council Member communication. Diane suggested a meeting in June as this will be the last meeting before the summer hiatus. Further discussion will take place via email to the Members.

Adjourned:

Meeting adjourned @ 9:14PM

Respectfully Submitted By:  
Judy Beliveau, Acting Recording Secretary  
May 8, 2008