

**MIDDLETOWN CONSERVATION COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT 2015
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

In accordance with Article III Powers and Duties of the Commission, Item 3, the Conservation Commission of the City of Middletown (referred to herein as the Commission) is submitting this annual report, summarizing the Commission's activities in 2015 as well as outlining goals for the 2016 calendar year.

Membership:

In 2015, Joan Liska resigned as Chairperson and was replaced by Kate Miller and Jon Morris was elected as Vice Chairperson. Three standing members resigned. Four new members were appointed, however two resigned citing inability to attend meetings regularly. Current membership is ten. The Commission is actively seeking interested parties to fill the vacant positions.

Accomplishments:

- Revised the by-laws to reflect Commission activities and statutory purview, and organize work. First revision since 1994. Included reestablishment of three standing committees and appointment of members to each; review of purview in by-laws, ordinance and statute; and review of Freedom of Information Act requirements to ensure compliance.
- Took position in favor of the planning staff position and advocated for such with the Mayor and City Council.
- Took position to support the participation of the Middlesex Land Trust in the potential purchase of the Pierce Property and advocated for purchase of the property with the Mayor, Council members and others.
- Worked with staff to complete the 2015 edition of the Middletown Trail Guide.
- Took a position against synthetic turf fields because of the potential for deleterious environmental and land use impact; members participated in public hearings on the issue; communication with the Mayor, Council members and others.
- Continued liason with ECoin.
- Worked with students from Wesleyan to identify attributes of open space properties (GIS class).
- Continued work with University of Connecticut's Extension Forestry Program on the management of Wilcox Conservation property. Supported four workshops held for the public. Members attended workshops and organized Middlesex Community College participation in collecting data.
- Included local students in activities including:
 - Vo Ag students in collection of data at Wilcox Property
 - Wesleyan Students on mapping a trail and collecting GIS data on conservation properties
 - Two MxCC classes collecting data at Wilcox
- Began investigating additional management options and priorities.

- Participated in selection of a Community Farmer for the Mayor's Community Supported Agriculture project.
- Recruited two new members and increased outreach to community regarding opportunity to serve
- Continued to monitor status and needs of trails and report issues to staff.
- Submitted written support to Fish & Wildlife Service in support of the Maromas area of Middletown being designated as a "Focus Area" of the Silvio Conte Wildlife Refuge.
- Reviewed open space ranking criteria in preparation of evaluating City properties for open space potential.

Goals for 2016:

In 2016 the Conservation Commission hopes to accomplish the following:

- Fill remaining vacancies.
- Increase outreach including publicizing and printing the trail guide and holding one or more public event.
- Better blaze trails and identify City open space properties.
- Identify sources of funding for open space acquisition.
- Continue the Wilcox management project to ensure best use of the property including management activities that are self-funding and to develop a process that can be applied (with modification as necessary) to other properties and include public engagement.
- Develop a process for prioritizing properties for management including identification of primary management goals and begin applying the process to existing properties.
- Apply ranking process to identify short list of properties for acquisition.