**Connecticut Horse Council**

**February 6, 2023 Minutes**

Meeting called to order at 6:30pm by President Diane Ciano.

**PRESENT:** Diane Ciano**,** Meg Sautter, Denise Ciano, Vevette Greenberg, Laurianne Goulet, Danielle Borelli, Gary Rutkauskas, Rebecca Harnish, Cathy Languerand

Everyone introduced themselves. A Zoom Meeting was not able to be put through, so Sue Taricani, Brie Messier and Cory Iacino were on speaker phones.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**RECORDING SECRETARY’S REPORT:** Approval of December 5th Meeting Notes

Approved 1. Meg Sautter, 2.Laurianne Goulet Motion Passed

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT:** Carol is on vacation, so there is no report on new members until she gets back. Letters were sent to several organizations asking for their support. The Bethany Horsemen joined. Contact has been made Newtown Bridle Lands and Fairfield Bridle Lands Association. Diane will be speaking to the NBLA and Litchfield Hills Driving Club.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** No report

**FACEBOOK:** Facebook has a new look. We are managing the content and encouraging people on that page to support the CHC. The “Buy or Sell link has been taken off and discussion is now more horse related.

**WEBSITE:** Rebecca has done a lot of work on the website and continues to update it.

Some other work that needs to be done:

* Need information back up on Horse 911 & Connecticut Connections
* Add link to meeting notes
* Add Links to Horse Organizations and Business members on separate page: Check other Links to see if they are still working
* Improve information on CT Equine Advisory Council & CT Greenways Council
* Change Home page to have collage of CHC pictures
* Publications - Redo CHC Brochure on line and revise CHC-VHP Booklet

Laurianne will contact Jenifer Nadeau, UCONN Equine Extension Specialist, regarding information and permission to put up information on Horse 911 on CHC Website.

**TRAILS:**  **Vevette Greenburg reports on the following:**

CHC report for 2/6/2024 Due to the short day and the weather, I only managed to ride on December 31 in Roraback Wildlife Management Area and January 1st in White Memorial.

Roraback WMA is in good shape; the only place I feel there needs some trail work is on a lower trail that is primarily used by hunters. This trail is on the east side of South Road. Over the past 2 years many trees have come down and I have done work to clear the small stuff to make it passable, but the reality it is not really that great. Work needs to be done with a chain saw. This is a small 6-foot section that we step off the trail to go around. Even these downed trees effect this go around. This section is on a little ridge and there really is not much room for a go around. This section of trail is used because several years ago we stopped using the trail right near the stream because of a large tree hang down from above. Over the years we went under it, it settled each year and became more difficult and we felt unsafe with horses. We have not traveled that piece of trail since we started using this upper trail, which we found that the hunters were using. This trail terminates at South Road and here there is another tree that has been an issue. Someone has cut a small section off the bottom so we are able to walk over it in a twisted way, but it does get us out onto the road safely. This exits onto the road is just north of the bridges near the south road parking lot. There is just enough room for one car to park here and at times, after navigating the hazard at the end of the trail there may be just enough room for us to get around the vehicle parked there. I keep saying we need to go in with chain saws and correct this issue for the safety of all involved.

White Memorial I have not ridden here in a number of years and it was a pleasant ride. The views are spectacular. And the trails are wide for passing walks safely and we were able to have a little social time with them. I do not have anything to report that needs being done here. And if I did, I’m not sure I could report where the issue was.

**OUTREACH & EDUCATION:**

**DEEP -No Child Left Inside Winter Festival** – Burr Pond State Park, Torrington. Diane & Denise Ciano brought their mini “Grace” and “Cutter Girl”. Randy Olmstead was also there to help greet over 800 children and adults. The people loved the interaction with both horses. We hope to have more equestrians involved with other events DEEP is planning in several State Park throughout the year.

**Volunteer Horse Patrol Meeting & Open House** – Scheduled for Saturday, March 18th at the Company 1 Fire House, Newington. 10:00am- 2:00pm celebrating 21 years We will go over our total hours for 2023 which will be reported to DEEP. Our Guest speakers will be members of the Durham Animal Rescue Team (DART). There will be Pot Luck lunch and Raffles to raise money for vests and other equipment.

**National Trails Day** Diane proposed that the CHC-VHP host trail work days/campout at the Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp in Natchaug State Forest, clearing and replacing the Yellow diamond markers that are missing from the timber harvest. There are 3 multiple use trails marked from the camp that are 5-, 10- and 15-mile loops

**Salmon River State Forest**  –Diane addressed the DEEP Dept. of Forestry Plan for the Leesville Block and Wopowog Wildlife Management Area.  It was noted that the Forestry and Wildlife Management departments often use the term  “Passive Recreation” and that horseback riding and bicycling are not listed as they once were.  CHC questioned the removal of these two recreational activities from the definition. CHC-VHP member, Diane Morton along with 4 others ( Rick Morton, Jeanne Zirolli, Trish Leonard, and Marilyn Allatin walked the trails in the Leesville section and gave CHC a great report on the trail assess ability for equestrians and her report was also included in the CHC comment. They will continue to walk the Wopowog Wildlife Management Area and add to their report. The CT Horse Council offers its help as the plan proceeds in accessing the trails that are in there now as suitable for horseback riding and to have members of our Volunteer Horse Patrol to help patrol and maintain this valuable public forestland asset.  A copy of the emails is available for members to view.

**Mohawk State Forest** – CHC was notified of the Timber Harvest to take place regarding the spongy moth salvage (formerly known as the Gypsy Moth) and notified the equestrian community and the CT Trail Rides Association (CTRA) who have a private campground adjacent to the forest. Parts of the Mattatuck Trail is currently closed and work will continue on Toumey Road which will be closed while roadside dead trees are dropped.  Diane contacted the forester to ask that certain trees be taken down that are blocking the trails that equestrians use. There were several emails back and forth regarding the forestry plans and whether certain trails and the existing Tourney Rd. would be closed or not cleared because the forestry department is not about trails and their main goal seems to try to keep out ATV’s and bikes. The forester will be writing a draft forest management plan for the next 20 years and will be requesting commenting on this draft plan.

DEEP Kimberly Bradley, CT Trails and Greenways Program Coordinator and DEEP Liaison for the CT Equine Advisory Council responded to the emails and offered to support the development of a CT Trail Rides Association (CTRA) Cooperative Trail Maintenance agreement.

(Kim is also involved with New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) and other groups, working with Nepaug State Forest to develop a template for a Recreation Trails Management Plan that is envisioned to serve as an appendix to the State Forest Management Plan. The CHC has also asked to get involved with this plan and is seeking equestrians that may want to get involved in this during this planning stage. A copy of the emails is available for members to view.

**DEEP – CHC meeting request** – Because of the issues listed above and others discussed at previous Equine Advisory Council meetings, the CHC has sent a request letter for an in-person meeting with leadership of the Environmental Conservation Branch of DEEP that include the three divisions Forestry, Wildlife Management, State Parks & Land Acquisition:

Mason Trumble, Deputy Commissioner, Environmental Conservation

Lindsay Suhr, Land Acquisition and Management Office Director

Jenny Dickson, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Natural Resources

Christopher Martin, State Forester, DEEP Division of Forestry

Michael Lambert, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

Tom Tyler, Director, Division State Parks and Public Outreach

A copy of the letter is available for members to view

**LEGISLATION:** No Report

**OLD BUSINESS:** No Report

**NEW BUSINESS:** Sue Tarcani gave information on Mounted Search & Rescue training. She is getting in contact with a trainer from out of state, Bill Richie who will train and certify equestrians

Kathy Languerand spoke on her extensive training nationally and certifications in the horse industry and educating the public and equestrians.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS:**

**CHC Meeting Dates: Tuesdays: April 2 ,** June 4, Oct, 1, Dec. 3 @6:30pm

Eversource Community Room, 107 Selden Street, Berlin

**CT Equine Advisory**  The location for future meetings will be held at the Eversource Community Room Eversource Community Room, 107 Selden Street, Berlin at 6:30 pm on the following Thursdays: **March 24th**, June 20th, September 26th, December 19th The public is welcome.

Adjourned at 7:44pm 1.Meg Sautter 2nd Vevette Greenberg

Respectfully submitted

*Denise Ciano*

Acting Recording Secretary