



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2020, 7:00 PM
TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT**

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Members Sean Dwyer, Robert Zielfelder, James Gage and George Nickerson

ABSENT: Regular Member Laurie Burstein and Alternate Ann Harford

STAFF: Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner and Christine Post, Recording Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:01 PM in the Ellington Town Hall Annex, 57 Main Street, Ellington, CT.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items): Tom Palshaw of 120 Pinney Street, Ellington, Connecticut, addressed the Commission regarding scheduling power equipment training for trail maintenance. He also discussed the recommendations in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) about forest management and encouraged the Commission to act on those recommendations due to the past several years of damage and disease. He submitted documentation regarding the POCD and State of Connecticut guidelines. Vice Chairman Bidwell asked Mr. Palshaw to be put on the list of persons to be trained with power equipment for trail maintenance as the steward of the new Highland Trail. Chairman Quarno read the last paragraph of the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee February 5, 2020 Meeting Minutes, which stated, "The Committee expressed disappointment and will no longer pursue the previously discussed "power equipment" training offered by Public Works, as the Committee has learned that this training would be exclusive to the use of a weed-cutting apparatus which would not be relevant to the trails on Town Property." Mr. Palshaw will follow up on this information both with the Trails Committee and Public Works.

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Sustainable Ellington Initiative
 - a. 2.5 Create a Natural Resource and Wildlife Inventory

Ms. Houlihan reported that she has recruited John Colonese, Assistant Planner Wetland Zoning Official, to assist her with the wildlife inventory, and stated that John embellished what she worked on with surface geology, soils, hydrologic cycle up to and including the section on Prime and Statewide Important Farmland Soils. The Commission will review what has been prepared as homework and will send Ms. Houlihan their comments either via email or to be discussed at next month's meeting. There are many other sections to be completed such as steep slopes, geological features, water bodies, forested plans.

b. 2.7 Provide Education on Water Conservation

Ms. Houlihan indicated that the Town's Earth Day event is Saturday, April 25, 2020, which starts at 9 a.m. and the Conservation Commission has been given a booth by First Selectman Spielman's office and showed the Commission the various pamphlets, brochures and activity books on water preservation that were left over from last year's Farmer's Market. Ms. Houlihan will not be available to attend but will be able to assist the Commission in preparations. Commissioner Dwyer volunteered to work the booth as long as there is no conflict in his calendar. Chairman Quarno suggested using the existing banner and water conserving board at the booth, along with a map showing Ellington's open space, Farmland Preservation brochure and Plan of Conservation.

2. Update – Ellington Hockanum River Committee: Harford/Nickerson – Leads
 - a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Monthly agenda/minutes

There was nothing new to report.

3. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program: Gage/Staff – Leads

No updates yet on Oakridge Dairy, however, they are within their forty-five (45) day time frame to accept the official offer from the Department of Agriculture for purchase of development rights for some of their farmland. Ms. Houlihan reported that the Finance Office is working with the Planning Department to talk to the Board of Finance about establishing a special fund to fund the Farmland Preservation Program. An update will be provided as the budget progresses.

4. Report - Open Space Preservation Program: Gage – Lead

Ms. Houlihan distributed copies of a power point presentation regarding the Wraight property purchase. Monday, March 9, 2020, is the meeting with the Town Board of Selectmen to discuss their assistance in funding the purchase of the Wraight property. Commissioner Zielfelder believes some members of the Trails Committee will attend to offer support. Ms. Houlihan reviewed each slide with the Commission in detail and passed out a completed Open Space Ranking form for the Commission to review for accuracy prior to being included in the presentation. A portion of the property is on the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) Natural Diversity Database and Ms. Houlihan will reach out to the DEEP to try and get the specific information as to what endangered species wildlife habitat was found to hopefully include in the presentation. Ms. Houlihan confirmed the funding numbers with Commissioner Gage to complete that slide. Commissioner Gage will attend the meeting with the Board of Selectmen and Ms. Houlihan asked that he try to bring a copy of the appraisals for the Board's review.

Commissioner Gage indicated that at the Bellante property, Ricci Hirth is working on construction for trail access.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 19-20 Budget Expenditure Update

There were no expenses during February to report.

2. Approval of the February 4, 2020 regular meeting minutes

MOVED (ZIELFELDER) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSED (BIDWELL ABSTAINED) TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 4, 2020 WITH ONE CORRECTION, PAGE 4, LAST PARAGRAPH DELETE THE WORDS "BY THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT".

3. Correspondence:

- a. Connecticut Land Conservation Conference, Saturday, March 21, 2020, Middletown, CT.

- b. Hockanum River Bird Documenting Poster by Kush Kataria

Ms. Houlihan will talk to Commissioner Ann Harford about her intent for this poster. Ms. Houlihan stated it could be included into the Natural Resource and Wildlife Inventory.

- c. Ms. Houlihan referred to an email she sent from the Citizens Campaign for the Environment seeking support from local conservation groups about a Bottle Bill that is pending. She stated that because there were only two responses there wasn't enough support for the Bill.

- d. Ms. Houlihan reported that she attended the Second Annual Northern Connecticut Agricultural Summit at Asnuntuck Community College and that she and Laurie Whitten, the Director of Development Services for Enfield, were speakers at the summit and spoke about farm exemptions, regulations and permits and there was a good turnout.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (ZIELFELDER) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Post, Recording Clerk