



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020, 7:00 PM
ZOOM MEETING
(IN-PERSON PUBLIC ATTENDANCE NOT PERMITTED DUE TO COVID19)
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROVIDED VIA ZOOM)**

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Regular Members Robert Zielfelder, Laurie Burstein and James Gage and Alternates Ann Harford and Jessica Fay

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell and Regular Members Sean Dwyer and George Nickerson

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 7:04 PM.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items): **NONE**

Chairman Quarno introduced and welcomed the new commission member, Jessica Fay.

II. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

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

Ms. Houlihan reported that she received a response to her request regarding the natural diversity database information from the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) by way of a letter dated August 14, 2020 which includes detailed information regarding bird, turtle and snake species known to be in different areas of Ellington. Ms. Houlihan asked the commission for advice as to how to incorporate this into the Natural Resource and Wildlife Inventory. Commissioner Gage suggested adding the letter as an appendix to the inventory. Chairman Quarno suggested including a summary paragraph in the inventory to introduce the topic and include the letter as an attachment. Ms. Houlihan reported that the DEEP suggests the natural diversity database be reviewed whenever there is a project that falls within those areas and stated that she will draft a summary paragraph for the commission's review.

Ms. Houlihan prepared a section for the inventory setting forth an overview of the Shenipsit Lake and wants to incorporate Crystal Lake as well. Commissioner Harford remarked that Shenipsit Lake is the beginning of the Hockanum River. Commissioner Gage suggested changing the language for Shenipsit Lake to indicate that it is a reservoir. Commissioner Zielfelder suggested including the Shenipsit Forest and Nye Holman Forest to the section in connection with the endangered species. Ms.

Houlihan's goal is to tie this section into the Plan of Conservation and Development so that the two (2) documents compliment and refer to each other.

b. 2.7 Provide Education on Water Conservation

Nothing new to report.

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

Commissioner Harford reported that the trails off West Road had a lot of damage from the storm several weeks ago. She said there are 25 trees down and the trails north of Sullivan Tire are blocked. She stated there is quite a mess south of Sullivan Tire including 4 or 5 trees in the river. The trails committee has been clearing brush to get to the trees in the river. They stopped mowing 3 weeks ago due to lack of rain and once the river is cleared of the debris, they will then complete the mowing. Commission Harford indicated that Public Works was called to help due to the size of the trees. The committee sent pictures of the damage to Public Works because the trees are 3 to 4 feet wide and 50 feet tall which is beyond the trails committee's capability to clear.

- b. Review of proposed minor site improvements on town-owned land, Batz property, 97 Shenipsit Street, APN 030-005-0000, Residential (R) Zone

Ms. Houlihan reported she brought the site plan to the Planning & Zoning Commission which generally controls site plan review for parks. The Planning & Zoning Commission granted Ms. Houlihan the authority for staff level review as a minor site plan modification. There are proposed bridges in wetlands areas along with an amphitheater to be built as shown on the site plan in the second field.

3. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program: Gage/Staff – Leads
a. Status - Oakridge Dairy Application, Jobs Hill and Meadow Brook Roads.

Ms. Houlihan reported that the Finance Department has decided that the best funding source for this project is for the Town of Ellington to approve a bond. A summary of the terms will be presented to Board of Selectmen notifying them that there will be formal motions put before them in October asking them to pass it, approve it and send it to town meeting.

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

Commissioner Gage reported that the Land Trust is still waiting for DEEP to release the grant money to purchase the Wraight property. He further indicated that the Land Trust was contacted by a solar power organization interested in the Swan Farm and Meyers Farm on Reese Road, which is a total of just over 100 acres, for solar farming. However, the Land Trust turned down the proposal because both farms are protected by a DEEP conservation easement and are prime farmland. Commissioner Harford queried what the minimum land requirement was to support a solar project, and Ms. Houlihan indicated it is dependent on the size of the project. Ms. Houlihan also indicated that the DEEP has added procurement processes via legislation which is tied to certain megawatts of clean energy.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 20-21 Budget Expenditure Update

The only expenditure during the last month is for the part time salary for the recording secretary.

2. Approval of the July 7, 2020 regular meeting minutes

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 7, 2020 AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence:

- a. Pursuant to CGS Section 16-15j-40(a), Letter from Pullman & Comley, dated August 5, 2020, pertaining to East Windsor Solar One, LLC petition of Declaratory Ruling for solar project on East Road in East Windsor south of Middle Road and west of Tripp Road.

Ms. Houlihan stated that the portion of land which is in Ellington will not be impacted by this solar project. The Town of Ellington is being notified because the proposed solar project is within 2,500 feet of Ellington and the Board of Selectmen has the right to hold hearings. Ms. Houlihan showed the commissioners the property in question on the GIS map.

The Commission discussed whether the next meeting would be via zoom or held in person. Ms. Houlihan explained that the Governor's Declaration of Public Health and Civil Preparedness due to the pandemic from March was set to expire September 9th, however, just this afternoon the Governor extended it until next year, February 9, 2021. The new expiration date coincides with the legislative session and legislators will be available to address the issue if any further extension is needed. The Governor will still have to extend all the different executive orders including the one allowing zoom meetings for municipal agencies. Ms. Houlihan will continue to monitor the updates. The commissioners agreed they are more comfortable with continuing zoom meetings and agreed to plan on a month by month basis.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Post, Recording Clerk