



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020, 7:00 PM
ZOOM MEETING
(IN-PERSON PUBLIC ATTENDANCE NOT PERMITTED DUE TO COVID19)
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROVIDED VIA ZOOM)**

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Members Sean Dwyer and George Nickerson and Alternate Jessica Fay. Regular Member James Gage joined the meeting at 7:24 PM.

ABSENT: Regular Members Robert Zielfelder and 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 7:05 PM.

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

II. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

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

Ms. Houlihan gave an overview of several updates she made to the Natural Resource and Wildlife Inventory which will be sent to commissioners for review and comment at the next meeting.

- b. 2.7 Provide Education on Water Conservation

Commissioner Dwyer suggested discussing the current drought with the Water Conservation Commission. Ms. Houlihan stated Connecticut Water Company includes information on how to conserve water in their bills. Ms. Houlihan will put Ellington's water conservation tips on the commission's web page. The commissioners agreed they will revisit this topic next month depending on weather patterns.

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

Commissioner Nickerson reported that the Trails Committee has completely cleared one blockage of the Hockanum River Trail between the Diamond Exchange and Sullivan Tire.

Ms. Houlihan reported that she spoke with Linda Anderson of the Trails Committee and she indicated that the Trails Committee is focused on moving forward with the amphitheater and observation areas on the Batz property.

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

Ms. Houlihan will be at the Board of Selectmen Meeting on November 9, 2020 at 7 p.m. and will be presenting the request to forward to Town Meeting Oakridge Dairy's 2 easements via bond approval. She suggested commissioners attend the meeting to provide support and indicated the meeting will be limited to 12 in person attendees on a first come, first serve basis but participants can also attend via zoom. Ms. Houlihan will send the agenda to the commissioners once it is prepared and reiterated that this action only requires a ten percent (10%) town match to preserve 167 acres of farmland in Ellington.

Ms. Houlihan reported she is working with the Economic Development Commission (EDC) to advance the Plan of Conservation and Development goals regarding agriculture related activities. Ms. Houlihan shared a memo that has been drafted allowing potential regulation amendments to permit farm breweries, cideries, distilleries and wineries. Chairman Quarno asked the status of this process and Ms. Houlihan explained this language will be further expanded to include venues, hay rides and corn mazes before being forwarded on to Planning and Zoning for their review and approval, so there are several months of work ahead, but she indicated this might be approved early next year.

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

Commissioner Gage advised the commission that the status on the Wraight property is still same as last month. Commissioner Dwyer suggested talking to a State Representative to assist moving the process along. Commissioner Gage said he knows Chris Davis and will reach out to him.

Ms. Houlihan received a call from Scott Brady in response to her letter and he indicated that they are potentially interested in working with the town to purchase 79 Kibbe Road as an open space parcel. She told him that the sale price of \$550,000.00 is too high for the town to meet and he will talk with his family members and report back their bottom-line price. Commissioner Dwyer had previously inquired if there was any idea of the value of the land. Ms. Houlihan reported that there is no appraisal yet and that typically the town would not spend the money on obtaining an appraisal without having a signed contract in their price range. Ms. Houlihan discussed the appraisal results for the Aaron's property values before the Great Recession and after the Great Recession and she indicated the Brady's asking price is far above both numbers. Ms. Houlihan further reported that the land could support one lot 'as is' but the current owners would be required by Connecticut Water Company to bring in a public water main if they wanted to subdivide the parcel.

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 September 1, 2020 regular meeting minutes

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (FAY) AND PASSED (NICKERSON ABSTAINED) TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2020 AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence:
 - a. CACIWC Membership Renewal Fees 2020-21

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (BIDWELL) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO RENEW THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR 2020 TO 2021 FOR THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION AND INLAND WETLANDS COMMISSIONS, INC.

- b. Letter dated September 23, 2020 from The Society of Soil Scientists of Southern New England Official Registry

This correspondence is notification that the Wetlands Soil Scientist's Directory will not be available as a hard copy any longer, it will now be available solely online.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (BIDWELL) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Post, Recording Clerk