



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2022, 7:00 PM

IN PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT
REMOTE ATTENDANCE: ZOOM MEETING
(ATTENDEES BELOW WERE IN PERSON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

PRESENT: Remote Attendance: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Regular Members George Nickerson, Sean Dwyer, James Gage, Laurie Burstein, and Alternate Jessica Fay

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Member Robert Zielfelder and Alternate Ann Harford

STAFF: Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner and Remote Attendance: Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items): None

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Plan of Conservation & Development, Chapter 4 - Conservation Strategies, Natural Resource Preservation.
 - a. Review & Update List of Priority Parcels for Farmland and Open Space

Ms. Houlihan indicated that she audited the open space ranking forms that the commission went through. She presented a map of Green Road and talked about possibilities for open space initiatives and farmland preservation in the area. Ms. Houlihan said the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee is looking to work on a long-term plan for a cross-town trail from South Windsor to the Somers line along the power lines. Parcels to the west of Green Road are vacant and most of the road is unimproved.

Ms. Houlihan asked the committee their interest in approaching the property owners to the west of Green Road for a large-scale open space purchase for use by the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee. Chairman Quarno stated that it may be important to initiate a conversation with the First Selectman about purchasing the land from property owners in the area if the committee agreed to pursue such a matter. Ms. Houlihan stated the properties could be preserved through open space purchase or sale of development rights. At the committees' approval, Ms. Houlihan said she would

talk to the First Selectman about purchasing some properties to the west of Green Road through the Open Space Fund or the Farmland Preservation Fund.

Commissioner Nickerson asked what the circles on the Green Road Parcel Map were for. Ms. Houlihan said that the blobs were from the National Diversity Database and were to indicate that the area contains animals that are endangered, threatened and species of special concern. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection decide which species of animal meet the criteria to be in one of these three categories in the specified area.

2. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program:

Ms. Houlihan reported that the second farm of Oakridge Dairy, LLC is yet to close. She asked the Department of Agriculture when the closing is anticipated to occur and will update the commission when a response is received.

Chairman Quarno asked if any other landowners have expressed interest in preserving their land. Ms. Houlihan confirmed no other farmland preservation applications are pending, and noted it's been a while since a letter of interest was mailed to landowners. Commissioners agreed to coordinate a direct mailer after the closing for Oakridge Dairy Farm 1. Chairman Quarno suggested testimonials be sought from farms that have gone through the program and to include their comments in the direct mailer.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program:

There is nothing new to report currently.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 20-21 Budget Expenditure Update

Ms. Houlihan reported that the budget process was changing for the budget year effective July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. The Board of Finance requested that the commission go through a zero-based budget, which will require the justification of each line item on the budget. To conform to the zero-based budget, she suggested that the commission budget how much they will donate to conservation boards at the end of each budget year, which was previously calculated based on the remaining balance. In fiscal year 2021, \$525 was donated to the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, the Northern Connecticut Land Trust, and the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee. In 2019-2020 there were no donations to conservation boards by the commission due to the repairs to a suspended bridge on a trail near the Vernon Sewer Plant. In fiscal years 2018 and 2019, the commission donated \$430 to the Northern Connecticut Land Trust and the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee.

Ms. Houlihan asked the commission what they would like to budget for donations for this current budget year. Commissioner Dwyer said that \$500 would be appropriate since the donations help the town. Ms. Amsel said that the overall budget for the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee is about \$8,000. One of the largest expenses the committee has is the annual October Trail of Treats, although the event was not held the past two years due to COVID-19. Ms. Amsel indicated that \$500 would help the committee meet their budget goals.

The commission unanimously agreed that they would like to budget to donate \$500 to the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, the Northern Connecticut Land Trust and the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee. Ms. Houlihan will present the budget proposal to the Board of Finance.

2. Approval of the January 11, 2022 regular meeting minutes

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (NICKERSON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 11, 2022 AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence:
 - a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Monthly agenda/minutes

Ms. Amsel addressed the commission. She said that a woman is doing presentations at the Ellington Senior Center on various topics including birdwatching and animals. Ms. Amsel also indicated that one of the projects of the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee will be to update the trail maps.

- b. Northern Connecticut Land Trust Annual Report

Ms. Houlihan shared that the town received the Northern Connecticut Land Trust Annual Report for 2021-2022.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (FAY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk