



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 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 Sean Dwyer, James Gage, Robert Zielfelder, and George Nickerson (arrived at 7:38 PM), and Alternate Jessica Fay. In Person: Alternate Ann Harford

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell and Regular Member Laurie Burstein

STAFF: Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner (In Person) and Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:03 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 of Plan of Conservation for potential updates to Chapter 2 – Protected Land Inventory and Table 1.

Ms. Houlihan noted that the last time the Inventory of Open Space, Farmland, and Recreational Assets was updated was in 2014, and cited an error for the "T" Properties that has been corrected (the properties were previously listed as having an area of 73.32 acres, but this was corrected to 73.35 acres). Since the last update, the Bellante (Sandy Beach Road), Wraight (Webster Road), and Pearl parcels have been added as open space properties by the land trust. The Bird Sanctuary is owned by the South Windsor Land Trust, not the Audubon, who is erroneously listed as the owner on the Inventory of Open Space, Farmland, and Recreational Assets. Ms. Houlihan said that the previous total area of preserved space by the land trust was 171.54 acres but is now 336.38 acres. Bahler Farm, Oakridge Dairy Farm (Jobs Hill Road), and Wraight Farm were added to the list of farmland since it was last updated, which increased the total area from 763 acres to 977.25 acres. The total amount of open space, farmland, and recreational assets increased from 3,654 acres to 4,033.30 acres. The total area of the Town of Ellington is 22,075.

Commissioner Gage suggested changing the owner names for the sites listed on the Land Trust Parcels from “Connecticut Land Trust, Inc.” to “Northern Connecticut Land Trust, Inc.” Ms. Houlihan said that the correct name was listed on the spreadsheet, however it did not print out.

b. Review & Update List of Priority Parcels for Farmland and Open Space.

A list of parcels was compiled along Green Road for potential farmland or open space purchase. There are a total of 238.56 acres on the west side of Green Road. The parcel with the Eversource easement is 171 acres. The properties listed on Green Road were compiled as potential areas for a cross-town trail along the power line. Ms. Houlihan asked the commission if they wanted to consider purchasing any of the parcels from the landowners as open space purchases. Commissioner Zielfelder asked what the planned route for the cross-town trail was. Ms. Houlihan said that South Windsor has a cross-town trail and approached the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee about possibly extending the trail along the power lines from the South Windsor line to the Somers line, including land along Green Road. Valerie Amsel, representing the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee, indicated that the process in South Windsor has been ongoing for ten years.

Ms. Houlihan said the parcels along Green Road are mostly residentially zoned, except for portions of Decarli, Inc. and the gravel pit, which are industrially zoned. Chairman Quarno asked if the commission would need to gauge the interest of the property owners before presenting the proposition to the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Houlihan said she could send a letter-of-interest to the property owners stating that the Conservation Commission is interested in this area for the purpose of open space or farmland preservation and to contact the Planning Department if they are interested in preserving their land or want to enter into a contract with the town for an open space or farmland preservation purchase. The commission agreed that Ms. Houlihan should send a letter-of-interest to the property owners before the next meeting.

MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ENDORSE THE REVISIONS TO THE INVENTORY OF OPEN SPACE, FARMLAND, AND RECREATIONAL ASSETS, AND CHANGE THE OWNER NAME FOR THE BIRD SANCTUARY TO THE SOUTH WINDSOR LAND TRUST.

2. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program:

Ms. Houlihan said the Connecticut Department of Agriculture anticipates the other farm owned by Oakridge Dairy, LLC would close in May. She also said that more interest in the preservation program might come from the letter-of-interest being sent to the property owners on Green Road, and an additional letter-of-interest that will be sent to other farms in town once the parcel owned by Oakridge Dairy, LLC closes. The last time a letter of this type was sent to farms was in 2018.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program:

Ms. Houlihan called Scott Brady of 79 Kibbe Road again to see if he is interested in selling the property for open space preservation. She said that he is not currently listing the property for sale, however he would talk to his siblings – who are also named in the trust – to see if they were interested. She said that First Selectman, Lori Spielman, would call Mr. Brady to follow-up on the conversation.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 21-22 Budget & Expenditure Update & FY 22-23 Revised Budget Proposal.

Ms. Houlihan reiterated that the Board of Finance has asked for all departments to present budgets this year as a zero-based budget. She said that \$1,500 was originally put into the Contracted Services account and was itemized as donations of \$500 each to the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Northern Connecticut Land Trust, and the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee. The Board of Finance did not approve the \$500 donation for the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee because the committee has their own budget now, and \$1,000 relocated to Dues & Subscriptions. The fiscal year 2022-23 overall proposed budget has been reduced from \$3,850 to \$3,350.

Commissioner Harford asked if the commission was doing any advertising this spring. Ms. Houlihan said there is an Earth Day event on April 23. She also said that the first annual Ellington Farm Day is tentatively set for September 17, 2022, and she has written a letter to farms in town to see if they are interested in participating. The Economic Development Commission will advertise it.

2. Approval of the March 8, 2022 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 8, 2022 AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence:

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

Ms. Amsel, representing the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee, addressed the commission. She said the committee received money from the Conservation Commission this year. The committee has spent a lot of time clearing trails this spring and is using some of the money provided by the commission to buy a battery-operated leaf blower to make the process easier and faster. The trail at Metcalf has been closed due to an ongoing problem with the trees. It is estimated that \$50,000 is needed to take care of the trees in that area. Additionally, emergency locator signs are being installed along trails in town, and information for these will be put at the trail kiosks. The committee will be observing the trails at Stein Road on April 15th to take note of what is needed for bridges along the trails. The trails committee will install signs from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection at trail kiosks warning hikers about dead and fallen trees.

Commissioner Harford referred to a news story that came out recently that addressed pollution in the Hockanum River. She said the article mentioned that Vernon, Manchester, and East Hartford are warning residents by putting up signs saying that the fish should not be consumed. Ms. Amsel said she has not heard anything about Ellington. Commissioner Dwyer said he helped install the signs along the Hockanum River in East Hartford, and that the text is in English and Spanish. He suggested contacting the North Central District Health Department (NCDHD) for guidance. Ms. Houlihan will check-in with the Ellington Department of Public Works and NCDHD to

see if signs will be posted. Commissioner Harford asked to be updated. Trail volunteers can assist with posting signs.

b. Northern CT Land Trust Landmark newsletter March 2022

Commissioner Quarno said there is a list of outdoor activities scheduled for 2022 in the newsletter.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

**MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (QUARNO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO
ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:51 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk