



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 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: Vice Chairman David Bidwell and Alternate Ann Harford; Remote Attendance: Regular Members George Nickerson, James Gage and Robert Zielfelder

ABSENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Regular Members Sean Dwyer and Laurie Burstein, and Alternate Jessica Fay

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

OTHERS

PRESENT: Valerie Amsel, Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee Liaison

I. CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chairman David Bidwell called the meeting to order at 7:22 PM.

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

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Review of conservation sections from the 2022 Sustainable CT Action Overview Worksheet

Ms. Houlihan said she mentioned at last month's meeting that some conversation came out of the Shared Services Committee about Sustainable Connecticut. The Conservation Commission processed some of the action items related to this in the past. Ms. Houlihan said she anticipates an internal group of department heads will be established soon so work can continue in this area. Many disciplines must have sustainable action for the town to achieve Sustainable Connecticut certification. Ms. Houlihan compiled a list of sustainable action items for the commission to work on.

In response to Commissioner Harford, Ms. Houlihan noted that a brownfield is land that has formerly been developed and has the potential of being contaminated. Ms. Houlihan noted the commission discussed watershed conservation education at past events and town newsletters. She said the commission might consider refreshing the open space plan, but the recently adopted natural resource and wildlife inventory should qualify for credit. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection maintains a list of brownfields throughout the state, however Ellington does not have many. Brownfields are not currently identified on MapGeo.

To achieve Sustainable Connecticut certification, the town must complete at least one action item that qualifies for points in each of the 13 required categories, and a minimum of 200 points is required to be eligible to apply. There are two levels of certification: silver and bronze. Ms. Houlihan said there might be a gold status introduced at some point as well. Before the status levels were introduced, towns simply received certification if they applied and met the required criteria. Vice Chairman Bidwell asked if the town had reached silver status. Ms. Houlihan said the town has never applied for certification through Sustainable Connecticut. The Conservation Commission, the Economic Development Commission, and the Public Works Department have all completed some action items.

Ms. Houlihan mentioned the potential for the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee and the Conservation Commission to work together to fulfill some of the criteria for certification for pollinator pathways. Vice Chairman Bidwell asked if the wildlife inventory that a student did a few years ago would earn some points. Ms. Houlihan said it might get some points.

Commissioner Nickerson asked Commissioner Harford if adding milkweed to the areas where there is pollen-producing vegetation would be worthwhile. Commissioner Harford said it would be. Some bulbs were planted near the kiosk on Windermere Avenue this past spring. On Brian's Way a semi-garden was planted. More plants were planted on West Road. Vice Chairman Bidwell said that it's important to identify and protect areas in town where milkweed is already growing, especially town property. He also asked if the list is a part of a larger document where the commission can dig in deeper. Ms. Houlihan said the supplement given to the commissioners is an excerpt that reflects conservation actions. She can provide the complete list, and the list is also available on the Sustainable Connecticut website. Ms. Amsel will get back to the commission on the plant species that could not be planted as a part of a pollinator pathway. Commissioner Harford referred to a website called pollinatorpathway.org for assistance.

2. Plan of Conservation & Development, Chapter 4 - Conservation Strategies, Natural Resource Preservation:

Ms. Houlihan said this item should continue to be on the agenda. As the commission goes through the Sustainable Connecticut action item list, there may be an opportunity to overlap with some of the goals and strategies for conservation in the Plan of Conservation and Development.

3. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program:

The second Oakridge Dairy farmland preservation application - that has been in the works since 2016 – is set to close in September. The farmland layer on GIS will be updated to reflect the Wraight property, as well as the farmland preservation easement that closed in October of 2021 for Oakridge Dairy.

4. Report - Open Space Preservation Program:

The commission discussed 79 Kibbe Road, a potential open space preservation parcel. Scott Brady, partial property owner, confirmed there's been no reduction in the price of the property. In addition to Ms. Houlihan, Commissioner Gage and First Selectman Lori Spielman have also reached out separately to Mr. Brady. The matter is status.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 21-22 Conservation Advocacy Contributions and FY 22-23 Budget & Expenditure Update

Customarily, the commission donate unexpended budget funds to different conservation groups. Previously, the three groups the commission donated to are the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, the Northern Connecticut Land Trust, and the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee. The commission can no longer donate to the trails committee because they now have their own budget. There was about \$1,000 left in FY21/22 budget and it was encumbered. The commission's motion to approve contributions to conservation groups is needed by the end August. This is the last time the commission will have to go through the encumbrance process because next year's donations are an approved budget line item.

Commissioner Gage abstained due to a conflict of interest.

MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) AND PASSED (GAGE ABSTAINED) TO DONATE \$500.00 TO CONNECTICUT LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL, AND \$500.00 TO THE NORTHERN CONNECTICUT LAND TRUST.

2. Approval of the June 14, 2022 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (HARFORD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 14, 2022 AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence:

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

Ms. Amsel said that markers had been installed on three or four trails for emergency services. First responders came to look at the markers and observe how they would proceed should an emergency situation arise. Ms. Amsel said First Selectman Spielman said the town received \$55,000 through a grant that would allow the town to remove dangerous trees at Metcalf open space and permit trails to be reopened. There is currently no timeframe for award of the grant.

The committee has not spent a lot of time working on the trails because of the extreme warm weather. There is still conversation about putting disc golf at Ellington Highlands. Ms. Amsel also reported that there was a good turnout for the birdwatching program and astronomy program. There were 11 people for the birdwatching program and 40 people for the astronomy program.

b. Connecticut Farmland Trust – June Update at a Glance

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (NICKERSON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk