



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187
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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2023, 7:00 PM

ONLINE MEETING - INSTRUCTIONS TO JOIN MEETING PROVIDED BELOW

I. CALL TO ORDER:

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items):

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Sustainable CT - Review of Section 3.4 Develop an Open Space Plan and Section 5.3 Develop Agriculture-Friendly Practices.
2. Plan of Conservation & Development, Chapter 4 - Conservation Strategies, Natural Resource Preservation.
3. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program.
4. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 22-23 Budget & Expenditure Update.
2. Approval of the December 13, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes.
3. Election of Officers.
4. Correspondence/Discussion:
 - a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Monthly Agenda/Minutes.
 - b. Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Request for Proposals for Recreational Trail Grants through March 1, 2023.
 - c. Copy of Approved Conservation Commission 2023 Meeting Schedule.
 - d. CT Land Conservation Council Donation Thank You Letter.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting is February 14, 2023.

The January 10, 2023, meeting will be conducted solely by electronic equipment using the online video conferencing service provider Zoom, unless written request for in-person accommodation is received by the Ellington Planning Department not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting date. As provided by statute, members of the public attending electronic meetings will be provided the same opportunity to participate as in-person meetings. Meeting attendance details (below) are provided on the agenda and posted on the Town of Ellington webpage (www.ellington-ct.gov), Agenda & Minutes, Conservation Commission.

Join Zoom Meeting via link:

Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85985435558>

Meeting ID: 859 8543 5558

Passcode: 717664

Join Zoom Meeting by phone:

1-646-558-8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 859 8543 5558

Passcode: 717664

COMMISSIONERS: TO ASSIST IN ESTABLISHING QUORUMS REQUIRED TO CONDUCT MEETINGS, PLEASE CONTACT THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND A SCHEDULED MEETING.

Chapter Four: Conservation Strategies, Natural Resource Preservation

The preservation of community character is valued very highly by Ellington residents. To protect a rural landscape, the Planning and Commission and Conservation Commission will continue to give priority to the preservation of important open space assets and seek creative ways to preserve farmland and a vibrant farm economy for future generations. In addition, the preservation of key historic structures also helps to define Ellington's special character. These provide an important window into Ellington's early history and are worthy of preservation.

The on-line survey and 2 community visioning sessions (see supplemental information at the end of this report) clearly indicated strong support for both open space and farmland preservation. Residents felt passionate about preserving these assets to protect community character.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and Conservation Commission have taken several steps to preserve these assets since the adoption of the 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development including several important amendments to the zoning and subdivision regulations. These are summarized in Table 4-1. This chapter discusses additional actions which the Planning and Zoning Commission may consider to further refine regulations with the aim of accomplishing these goals. These are measures which may be implemented that do not require capital outlay by the Town.

Change to Better Preserve Farmland	Details
Adoption of density-based zoning regulations	Changes to Zoning Regulations where the presence of steep slopes, flood plain, and wetland soils limit lot yield
Adoption of more flexible farm use regulations	Residential zones: Keeping of horses, agricultural buildings, backyard poultry, bees. Commercial zones: Farm stands, farm store, brewery, brew pub, distillery.
Established an farmland acquisition fund	\$2 million referendum approved in 2007.

Table 4-1
Accomplishments Since the Adoption of the 2007 POCD

Open Space Preservation

The Ellington Conservation Commission adopted a Plan of Conservation in 2006 with updates in 2014. This plan establishes an important goal to preserve 21% of Ellington as protected open space. This is consistent with the State of Connecticut goal to preserve 21% of land statewide. Currently 3,816 acres or 17 % of Ellington have been preserved as shown in Table 4-2. This includes land that is owned by the Town, Northern Connecticut Land Trust, State of Connecticut, or where development rights have been purchased. It should be noted that the public has no rights to enter land where development rights have been purchased to preserve farmland. There are 888 acres of open space in this category. There is a total of 2,928 acres of land with public access or 13% of the Town.

INVENTORY OF OPEN SPACE, FARMLAND, AND RECREATIONAL ASSETS

(NOT INCLUDING GOLF COURSES AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS)

DESC.	OWNER	AREA
Pinney and Windermere (Including Pinney Street Fields)	Town	67.71
Carriage Hill Open Space	Town	18.51
Crystal Ridge Estates Open Space	Town	47.89
Crystal View	Town	35.3
Ellington Highlands Open Space	Town	29.5
Rising Acres II Open Space	Town	8.3
Tripp Road Open Space	Town	8
Mosley Plains Open Space	Town	4.62
High Ridge Open Space	Town	3.46
Hatheway Road	Town	3.18
Sunset Hill - Town Access	Town	1.6
Batz Properties	Town	44.86
Kimball Forest	Town	55.61
Meadow Brook Estates Open Space	Town	15.26
Metcalf Nature Preserve	Town	15.63
Stagecoach Crossing Open Space	Town	6.64
"T" Properties	Town	73.32
Arbor Park	Town	3.3
Brookside Park	Town	41.42
Sandy Beach	Town	7.23
Crystal Lake Memorial Park	Town	0.24
Porter Road Highlands	Town	3.16
Other Town Unimproved Open Lands	Town	19.18
Properties Taken In Lieu of Taxes	Town	8.55
Subtotal		522.47
Sunset Hill	Land Trust	14
Swann Farm	Land Trust	56.01
Joy Property	Land Trust	6.86
Shenipsit Woods	Land Trust	30
Ernie Boothroyd Preserve	Land Trust	58
Bird Sanctuary	Audubon	6.67
Bellante	Land Trust	37
Subtotal		208.54

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)		
Way Farm	PDR	68.6
Culbro Farm	PDR	171.09
Burke Farm	PDR	119
Pinney Farm	PDR	5
Myers Farm*	PDR/Land Trust	70.59
Dzen Farm	PDR	22.25
Silverhurst/Foster Farm	PDR	97.32
Silverhurst/Foster/Thrall Farm	PDR	20.57
Charter Farm	PDR	43.39
Pease Farm	PDR	20.79
McKnight Farm	PDR	124.429
Bahler Farms	PDR	125.785
Subtotal		888.814
Shenipsit State Forest	State	1396.92
Nye Holman State Forest	State	361.21
Bradway Reservoir	State	87.93
Boat Launch, Crystal Lake	State	4.69
Subtotal		1850.75
Crystal Lake		175.51
Shenipsit Lake		170.91
Subtotal		346.42
TOTAL		3816.99

*Included in open space totals

Table 4-2
Inventory of Open Space and Recreational Assets

Source: Plan of Conservation, Ellington Conservation Commission, 2007 and 2014

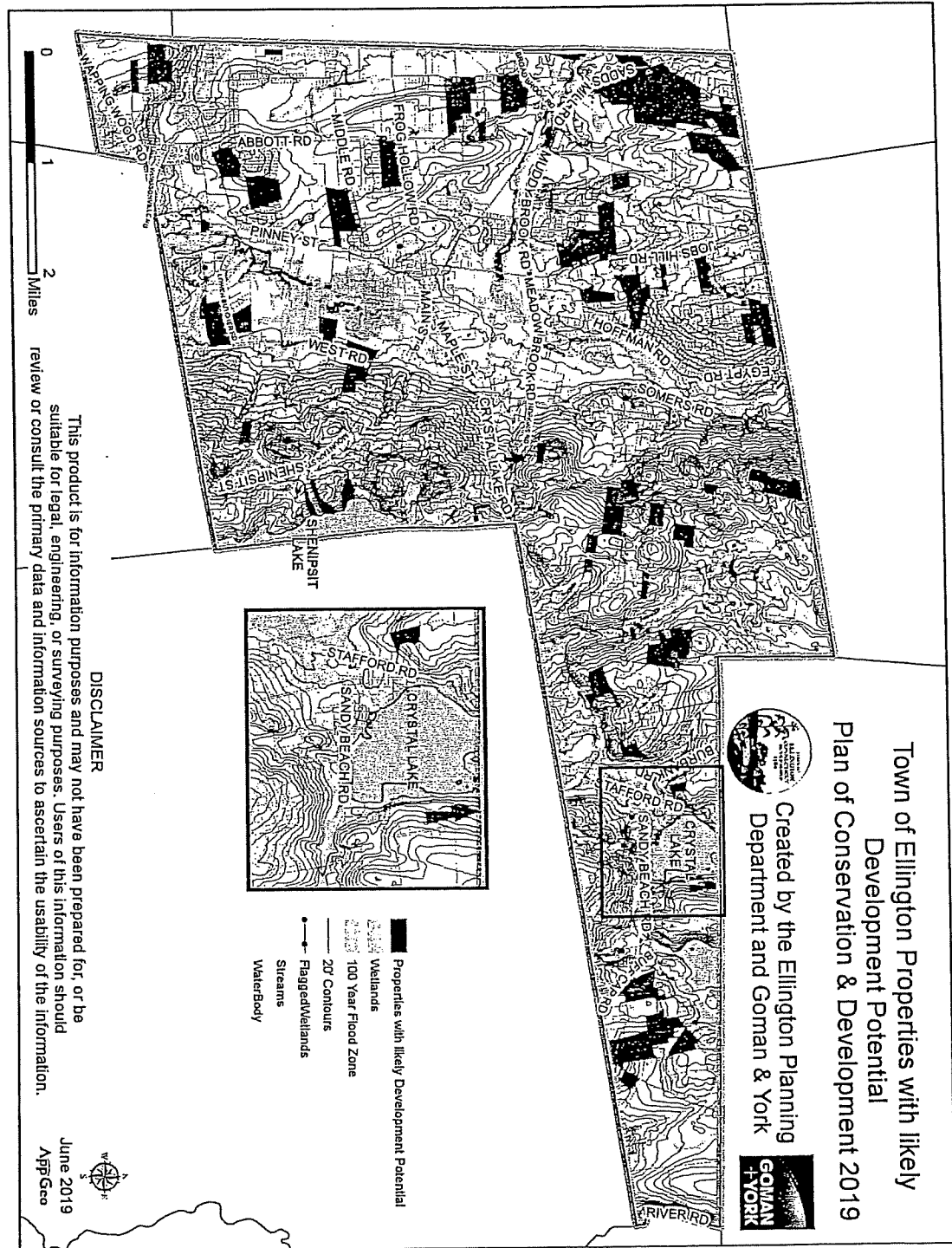
The Conservation Plan establishes five (5) “focus” areas and establishes objectives and strategies for each area. The 5 areas are:

- Western Farm Belt
- Shenipsit Lake and Forest
- Crystal Lake Watershed
- Eastern Panhandle
- Hockanum River Linear Park

The Conservation Commission's plan and its recommendations are formally adopted as part of this plan and are included as Appendix C.

It is important to note that land commonly referred to as open space, in fact, has different levels of protection regarding the certainty that the land will always remain open and undeveloped. In fact, although it is a goal of this Plan to permanently protect all existing open space assets identified in this Plan, those guarantees cannot necessarily be made in perpetuity. It is likely that these assets will remain undeveloped but that cannot always be assured. Important variables include whether the property contains restrictions in the deed, whether the property is in private or public ownership, and physical and regulatory constraints such as zoning, floodplain, wetlands, and steep slopes.

There is still a significant amount of land in Ellington which is in private ownership that has development potential. Although it is natural that residents sometimes associate these undeveloped properties as contributing to the rural landscape which they enjoy, they are not in public ownership, and may be developed in accordance with local requirements such as zoning, subdivision, wetlands, and the public health code. Map 4-1 depicts vacant parcels of land in private ownership excess of 5 acres in size. Property which has slopes in excess of 25% and where significant wetlands are present have been excluded due to limited development potential. In total there are 1,035 acres of undeveloped land with development potential.



Map 4-1

Vacant land parcels >5.0 acres, privately owned, excluding steep slopes, wetlands, and flood prone areas.

The Planning and Zoning Commission may wish to work with the Conservation Commission in identifying a list of high priority parcels of land to be targeted for preservation within each of the before mentioned 5 focus areas. These parcels can be selected on the basis of meeting the objectives of the conservation plan. Properties identified shall not be in a ranked order nor is it intended that the properties listed shall be the only properties that may be considered for preservation by the Town. However, identifying a list of properties can be a valuable tool for the Commission in their review of individual applications (site plan, special permit, subdivision) and by the Board of Selectmen who may consider the acquisition of certain properties when they are offered for sale.

It should be noted that the Town has a modest amount of funding available for the purchase of open space. As a rule, the Town does not on its own initiative target land parcels for acquisition, but rather reviews offers from private owners should choose to sell. The preparation of such a list may serve as notice to private landowners that there may be interest by the Town to purchase particular parcels. It may be helpful to a property owner should they be interested in selling their property. In addition, a list of priority parcels is not meant to bind the Town in any manner but to be used only as a guide for possible future consideration.

Considerations/Strategies

- *Identify high priority parcels for preservation.*

It may be prudent that the Planning and Zoning Commission work with the Conservation Commission in developing a list of high priority parcels targeted for preservation either through acquisition by the Town, partnering with the Northern Connecticut Land Trust, or through the purchase of development rights. This list may then be used when evaluating the possible purchase of these properties or in the purchase of development rights as they become available for sale. The Planning and Zoning Commission may also use this information to encourage the partial preservation of some of these parcels. For example, if appropriate the Planning and Zoning Commission may encourage the submission of an application for an open space subdivision vs. a traditional large lot subdivision if public sewers are available and site conditions warrant this type of development.

Transfer of Development Rights

A zoning technique known as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) offers additional opportunity to preserve open space without any capital outlay by the Town. To establish a program of TDR the official zoning map would need to be amended to include both “transfer in” and “transfer out” areas. Transfer- in areas represent those parcels where higher density development may be appropriate. Transfer-out areas represent undeveloped parcels of land which have been identified as having the highest priority for preservation. Some of the properties may include those identified by the Commission as a refinement to the Conservation Commission’s Plan of Conservation as discussed earlier in this chapter. The Commission retains maximum control as it is responsible to determine in advance which properties receive the

highest priority for preservation and which properties are appropriate for higher density development. In addition, a special permit is required. A great advantage of a TDR program is that it results in land preservation at no cost to the taxpayer. Designated “transfer out” properties can include both undeveloped land as well as property being used for agricultural purposes. If the transfer out parcel includes farmland, this land may remain in the ownership of the farmer following the sale of development rights, subject to a conservation easement, and may be sold in the future and used for similar purposes. Exhibit 4-1 shows a schematic of the mechanics of TDR.

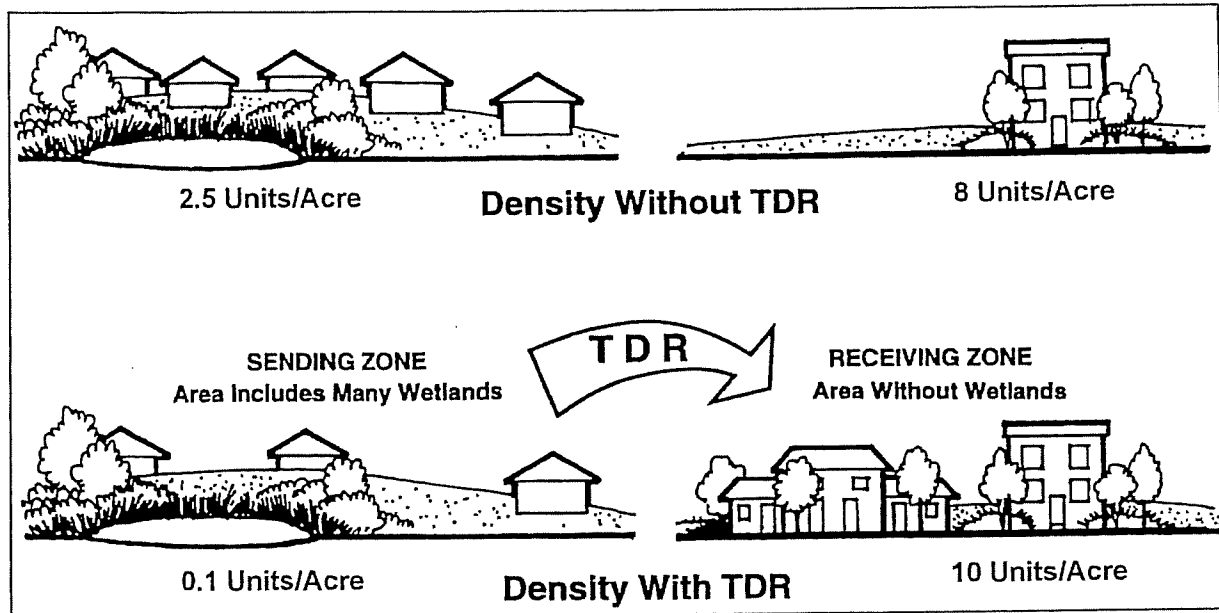


Exhibit 4-1: The Mechanics of TDR

Source: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

A TDR program by its nature does add complexity to a potential development application. Perhaps the most significant is that it requires a developer to obtain an interest in two or more (noncontiguous) parcels of land. A developer must secure an interest in land he/she wishes to develop, as well as an interest in land to be preserved (where development rights may be transferred out). The economics must be favorable enough for a developer to pursue such a transaction, given the added costs in time and uncertainty when compared to a more conventional development application. Accordingly, TDR regulations must be carefully crafted when establishing a formula for the transfer of rights between transfer out (sending) and transfer in (receiving) parcels. It may be prudent to offer a small increase in density to be assigned to the transfer-out parcel.

TDR traditionally involves the transfer of the potential residential development in the transfer-out parcel to added residential development assigned to the transfer-in parcel. It is possible, however, to also develop a formula which permits the transfer of potential residential development in exchange for additional commercial density in commercial zoning districts. As an example, a town in Massachusetts allows an additional 2,000 square foot increment in building size plus a potential increase in lot coverage for every acre of farmland preserved. It may be appropriate to utilize a concept like this in the permitting of compact commercial development in Ellington Village Center. These ideas are also discussed in Chapter 6: Housing Strategies and Chapter 7: Economic Development.

Considerations/Strategies

Adopt a Transfer of Development Rights program (TDR)

The Commission may consider adopting a TDR program through its Zoning Regulations to achieve the preservation of additional open space in targeted areas and increased residential densities in locations deemed appropriate by the Commission. Such an approach results in land preservation without capital expenditure by the Town. However, such an approach does add a level of complexity for a potential developer. As a result, careful thought must be given in developing the metrics of the transfer formula with enough incentive, such that a potential developer is encouraged to pursue this option over a conventional subdivision.

Agriculture

The Conservation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission are keenly aware of the importance of agriculture in Ellington and will continue to use its authority under zoning to adopt rules that favor agricultural operations. There are many benefits farming provides to the community which include:

- Producing food locally helps meet sustainable development goals.
- Retail sales associated with farming attract customers from outside of Ellington which may benefit other commercial establishments.
- Many environmental benefits including wildlife habitat and the potential for groundwater recharge.
- Underground farmland within the floodplain and floodway can convey and store floodwaters in an unimpeded manner.
- Farms provide jobs and contribute to the local economy.
- Net positive tax revenue as compared with conventional single-family subdivision.
- There are many intangible benefits associated with farmland including a rural aesthetics, open space, and preservation of rural character.

The Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, and taxpayers of Ellington have, through their actions, shown great support for agriculture. This is evidenced by:

- Approval of a \$2,000,000 referendum in 2007 for the preservation of farmland.
- Including partnering with the Connecticut State Department of Agriculture in the purchase of development rights for several farms totaling 888 acres.
- Amendments to zoning regulations which significantly broaden commercial opportunities for working farms.

How Agriculture is Currently Regulated

Ellington's regulations provide generous opportunities for agriculture in all residential zones and significant commercial opportunity in all commercial and industrial zones. A number of these regulations were adopted through a comprehensive set of amendments to the zoning regulations in 2010, 2014, and 2016. All residential zones permit agricultural opportunities along with limited related commercial uses. The boarding of horses is also permitted in these zones. Recent amendments allow a Brewery, Brew Pub, or Distillery by special permit in all Commercial and Industrial Zones.

The Planning and Zoning Commission has determined that agri-tourism presents a unique opportunity to combine aspects of tourism and agriculture which provide a number of financial, educational, and social benefits to the community while allowing farmers to supplement their farming activities with activities and events directly related to the farm and farming. The Commission may consider additional amendments to further promote agri-tourism. These activities may include hayrides, petting zoos, cut your own Christmas trees, horseback riding, carriage and sleigh rides, ice cream and baked goods, and garden tours. There is also a unique opportunity to promote farm wineries, farm breweries, and farm distilleries in Residential Zones. These uses, especially farm wineries, have become increasingly more popular over the past ten years. The State of Connecticut has now granted more than forty (40) licenses for farm wineries. In 2018 the State Legislature passed Public Act 08-187 establishing rules for farm wineries. Such activities, if allowed, can provide opportunities for a more viable agricultural operation along with a modest commercial/retail component. The key in permitting any agri-tourism related activity is to establish the correct balance between "traditional" agricultural activities such as the growing of crops and "less traditional" activities such as wine and beer tastings, retail sales, and the hosting of special events.

For example, few residents would question the bucolic nature of a vineyard or even buildings necessary to process grapes and produce wines at a modest scale. Experience has shown that introducing these added commercial activities is necessary to support the economics of such a facility. Some other activities often associated with a winery such as tastings, the sale of bottles of wine, and the use of the facility for special events such as meetings or/or weddings need to be properly integrated and scaled so as not to adversely affect neighboring residents using adequate buffers for abutting residentially used property.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider the adoption of regulations which would permit the establishment of a farm winery, distillery, or brewery by special permit on parcels of land in excess of ten (10) acres. Regulations must strike a balance between fostering the economic success of these agricultural enterprises and safeguarding property rights of surrounding residential neighbors. It is important to note that any land use brings with it some impact/consequence on nearby properties. For example, the sale of agricultural land and its development into a "traditional" single-family subdivision results in some neighborhood impact. The key in developing a balanced regulation is to establish a set of rules which permit the operation of a viable farm, but which result in a set of impacts to nearby properties that are comparable to those that would be generated by a residential subdivision (i.e.: traffic, noise, lot coverage, etc.)

The Planning and Zoning Commission may wish to consider establishing standards for the following:

- Requiring that a certain percentage of produce sold be grown on the farm. In the case of
- a winery that a certain percentage of grapes used in wine production be grown on the property where the production facility and tasting room is located.
- Limits on the total number of gallons of alcohol which may be produced. Limits may be linked to number of acres and may differ from maximum thresholds established by the State Liquor Control Commission.
- Limiting the size of the tasting room and indoor and outdoor space that may hold special events.
- Limit the number and size of outdoor events.
- Establish noise standards, buffer zones to nearby properties, and place limits on hours that special events may take place.
- Establish parking requirements.
- Limits on the amount of food which may be sold/served. Consider differentiating between sales during "normal" tasting hours and special events.
- Prohibition on obtaining a restaurant liquor permit from the State of Connecticut Liquor Control Commission.
- Limiting the scale of the commercial activities such that the Ellington Assessor may decide the farm is still eligible for special tax consideration under public act 490.
- Requiring that the owner of the farm resides full-time on the farm.

The preservation of farmland to preserve rural character is widely supported in Ellington. In their support many residents emphasize the rural and scenic character that farmland promotes sometimes without giving due consideration to the commercial and business aspects that are required to successfully operate a farm.

Connecticut's right-to-farm law exempts farms meeting specified conditions and following generally accepted agricultural practices, from certain nuisance laws, regulations, and ordinances concerning odor, noise, and other objectionable farming by-products. But it does not exempt them from nuisances caused by negligence or willful or reckless misconduct. Towns may also adopt right-to-farm ordinances to emphasize support for local farms and agriculture. They reiterate the right-to-farm law's protections from nuisance lawsuits and often declare farming as

an accepted and valued activity within the community. The Town may wish to consider adopting a local right to farm ordinance.

The PZC might consider adopting zoning regulations that require an adequate buffer between a proposed subdivision and an existing farm. For example, regulations could require a 200-foot separation between a proposed new house and any property line that is in common with an established farm.

Regulations could also be adopted to either encourage or require the use of cluster zoning when a new subdivision is proposed adjacent to an established farm, concentrating development away from the farm. Consideration may also be given to permitting a cluster style subdivision “as of right” and requiring a special permit for a traditional large lot subdivision to encourage cluster development a significant buffer when new lots are created adjacent to an established farm.

Considerations/Strategies:

- The PZC may wish to consider amendments to the Zoning Regulations to allow farm wineries, farm breweries, and farm distilleries by special permit. Regulations must address important considerations discussed above in order to balance the need to conduct an economically viable operation while mitigating potential adverse impacts of commercial activities on nearby residential properties. Permit limited use of these facilities for special events such as weddings and other outdoor events subject to the parameters discussed in this chapter.
- The PZC may wish to consider amendments to the Zoning Regulations that require a permanent buffer between proposed new residential lots and established agricultural operations. Regulations may also be adopted which either encourage or require the use of cluster techniques to minimize conflict between proposed housing and established farms.
- The Town may wish to consider adopting a right-to farm ordinance which demonstrates the Town’s support for agriculture by limiting opportunities for nuisance damage lawsuits to established farms who otherwise follow sound agricultural practices.
- The Commission may wish to consider amendments to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations which mandate a separation requirement between proposed new homes and established agricultural operations. The Commission may also consider regulations that either encourage or require the use of cluster zoning techniques to reduce areas of possible conflict between established farms and new homes.

Open Space or Cluster Subdivision

In 2011 Ellington adopted a density-based zoning regulation which establishes a maximum lot yield of either 0.5 or 0.6 homes per acre and minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet (except for 25,000 square feet in the lake residential zone with access to public water and sewer.) Under this regulation lots must average between 1.6 and 2 acres in size. (See sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 of the Ellington Zoning Regulations for more detail.

If soils are suitable or public sewers are available, the PZC may permit a reduction in lot size of 32,000 square feet. In this event overall density must still comply with the 0.5 or 0.6 requirement. To date (since 2011) there have not been any requests to seek a lot reduction to 32,000 square feet. The PZC may wish to consider an amendment to this density-based regulation aimed at the preservation of significant tracts of open space.

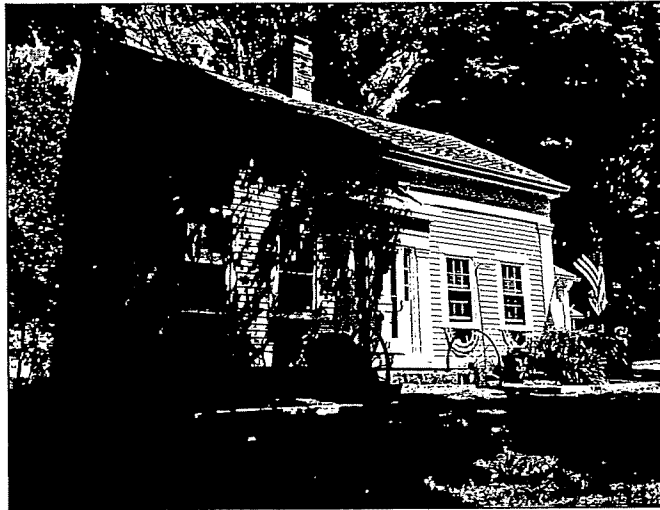
The following might be considered:

- Offering greater density and reduced dimensional standards when more than ten(10) acres of open space is preserved (in addition to the 10% open space requirement in subdivision regulations.) The PZC is to retain discretion on the location, shape and quality of the open space.
- Reduction in road width where the PZC determines that public roads are not required for overall road circulation and private roads are proposed.
- Identify individual parcels or areas where an open space subdivision would be preferred over a traditional large lot subdivision. In these locations permit an open space subdivision as of right and require a special permit for a traditional project. Factors to consider in identifying locations for an open space subdivision can include:
 - The presence of unique natural resources especially worthy of preservation (steep slopes, floodplain, wetlands, endangered species habitat)
 - Land which has been identified as having the highest priority for open space preservation
 - Proximity to other protected open space assets to add to areas of unfragmented open space

Considerations/Strategies

- Consider zoning amendments to Article 3 of the zoning regulations that would award a density bonus and reduction in required dimensional standards where significant amounts of open space are preserved well beyond minimum requirements established in the subdivision regulations.
- Consider identifying certain parcels or areas where an open space subdivision would be allowed as of right and where a traditional large lot subdivision would be allowed by special permit. Preparing a list of properties with the highest priority for preservation discussed in this chapter could also be used as the basis for this alternative approach.

Historic Preservation



The preservation of significant historic structures contributes to the quality of life of Ellington residents in many ways. The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation states:

“Connecticut cities and towns are defined by the history of human impact on both the natural environment and the built environment. Rural or urban, coastal or hill town, industrial center or suburb—each of the state’s 169 cities and towns has a distinct character derived in part from the buildings, sites, and structures that represent the heritage of that community. Preserving community character enriches the lives of Connecticut residents and adds vitality to neighborhoods and downtowns.”

The 2008 POCD discussed several steps which may be undertaken to identify and help preserve important historic structures. These recommendations have not been accomplished to date. These recommendations are still relevant and are incorporated into this plan.

As a first step, the Town should consider hiring a consultant to conduct a historic resource inventory. Grants are available through the State Historic Preservation Office. A consultant must be selected that meets certain qualifications established by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Following this, the Town may decide what additional steps to take to add various levels of protection to these structures. These measures range from honorary to regulatory. They include listing on the National Register of Historic Places, State Register of Historic Places, and/or the creation of a local historic district.

Considerations/Strategies

- Implement the various historic preservation strategies outlined in the 2008 POCD. Begin by conducting an inventory of historic structures.
- Consider adopting a demolition/delay ordinance which would impose a 30-day delay on owners seeking a permit to demolish a structure identified on the Town’s inventory. Give preservation groups an opportunity to negotiate privately with the owner for acquisition and possible adaptive reuse.

Town of Ellington

Town Planner Expenditure

Fiscal Year: 2021-2022

☐ Subtotal by Collapse Mask

☐ Include pre encumbrance

☒ Print accounts with zero balance

From Date: 7/1/2022

To Date: 12/31/2022

☒ Filter Encumbrance Detail by Date Range

☒ Exclude Inactive Accounts with zero balance

Account Number	Description	GL Budget	Range To Date	YTD	Balance	Encumbrance	Budget Balance	% Bud
1000.02.00270.10.50103	Part Time—Conservation Commi	\$1,300.00	\$0.00	\$520.00	\$780.00	\$0.00	\$780.00	60.00%
1000.02.00270.20.60221	Advertising Printing—Conserv	\$400.00	\$0.00	\$400.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
1000.02.00270.20.60222	Dues & Subscriptions—Conserv	\$325.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$325.00	\$0.00	\$325.00	100.00%
1000.02.00270.20.60223	Travel—Conservation Commissi	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
1000.02.00270.20.60234	Professional Development—Con	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
1000.02.00270.20.60250	Contracted Services—Conserva	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$975.00	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$25.00	2.50%
1000.02.00270.20.60254	St of CT Surcharges—Conserva	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
1000.02.00270.20.60341	Office Supplies—Conservation	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
1000.02.00270.30.60341	Office Supplies—Conservation	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Department: Conservation Commission - 00270		\$3,025.00	\$0.00	\$1,895.00	\$1,130.00	\$0.00	\$1,130.00	37.36%



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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2022, 7:00 PM

IN PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT
REMOTE ATTENDANCE: ZOOM MEETING

PRESENT: In-Person: Alternate Ann Harford; Remote: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Regular Members Robert Zielfelder, Sean Dwyer and James Gage

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Members George Nickerson and Laurie Burstein, and Alternate Jessica Fay

STAFF: In- Person: Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner; Remote: Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk

OTHERS

PRESENT: Valerie Amsel, Ellington Trails Committee Liaison

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:16 PM.

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

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Sustainable CT - Review of Section 3.4 Develop an Open Space Plan and Section 5.3 Develop Agriculture-Friendly Practices

Ms. Houlihan showed some of the progress that was made about developing an open space plan. She said the only way to achieve certification is for one action item to be completed in each of the thirteen categories and to create a Sustainable CT focus group for the town. She said she has a meeting scheduled with First Selectman Lori Spielman, however she is unsure where the process is at this point and that it might be best for the commission to focus on the Plan of Conservation and Development goals and initiatives if a focus group is not established. Ms. Houlihan said that once she has her meeting with the First Selectman, then she will have more information for how to proceed.

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

Nothing new to report.

3. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program:

There is an easement of 114 acres for Oakridge Dairy that is schedule to close on January 3, 2023. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection recently added another

requirement to the process. Ms. Houlihan asked if Oakridge Dairy wished to pursue the nearly 300 acres that was part of the June 2018 application. The company said that the original 300 acres has been removed from consideration for farmland preservation at this time. Currently, Oakridge Dairy is working on their methane digester and making some physical improvements to 80 Meadowbrook Road, which will allow them to expand their bottling operation. Chairman Quarno said it might be worthwhile to reach out to some of the other farmland owners considering this information. Ms. Houlihan said the total amount that will have been preserved when the parcel closes on January 3, 2023 will be 165 acres.

4. Report - Open Space Preservation Program:
 - a. Review draft revisions to pages 1-3 of the 2014 Plan of Conservation

Ms. Houlihan said that she changed the second chapter to reflect the amount of farmland that has been protected as of October 2021 (977 acres). The changes also reflect that the state has achieved 89% of their goal for open space farmland preservation in Ellington, while the municipality has achieved 61% and is behind by 944 acres.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE REVISIONS TO PAGES 1-3 OF THE 2014 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 22-23 Budget & Expenditure Update.
 - a. Request to approve annual donation to the CT Land Conservation Council, pursuant to 1:1 Matching Gift Challenge through December 31, 2022.

The CT Land Conservation Council is holding a challenge whereby municipalities who donate to them by December 31, 2022 will have their gift matched. The commission usually donates to the council through the budget.

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE AN ANNUAL DONATION of \$500.00 TO THE CT LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL.

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

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

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

- a. CT Land Conservation Council 2022 Updates & Highlights

Ms. Houlihan said there are new maps for the town trails. Ms. Amsel said that volunteers created the emergency markers which can be found on the maps and there are activities listed alongside a legend. She said she doesn't know if the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee physically has the maps yet.

- b. Ad Hoc Ellington Trail Committee Update

Ms. Houlihan said the Hockanum group fixed the bridge that was tilted, although it needs some extra work. Another bridge needs some more board and another one needs to be raised about six inches. The Highlands trail had four bridges installed, although it needs to be blazed. The Crystal Lakes region will have two more trails put in soon. She also reported that the Trail of Treats event went well.

Ms. Houlihan asked the commission if they would be willing to schedule meetings to be remote during the winter months. The commission agreed.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

**MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO
ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:46 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187

CHAIRMAN
LINDA ANDERSON

VICE CHAIRMAN
CYNTHIA VAN ZELM

SECRETARY
DEANNA WAMBOLT-GULICK

VALERIE AMSEL
PAM MCCORMICK
JUDI MANFRE
LARRISSA BURKE

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
November 2, 2022
Nicholas J. DiCorleto, Jr. Meeting Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cynthia van Zelm, Deanna Wambolt-Gulick, Pam McCormick, Linda Anderson, Judi Manfre

MEMBERS ABSENT: Valerie Amsel, Larrissa Burke

OTHERS PRESENT: Bruce Dinnie, Tom Palshaw, Donna Allen, Lawrence James

I. Call to Order: Ms. Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm.

II. Citizens' Forum

Mr. James commented on the Crystal Ridge Trail, adding that he supports the Committee's mission but has some concerns, as he owns property that abuts the entrance of the trail. He's looking for a project plan with respect to the trail blazing process and is wondering if this process has been formalized and if there is a plan that goes through the various phases of the project.

Ms. Anderson shared that much of this information is available in previous minutes from the past year. She shared the steps that the Committee takes, including going before the Inland/Wetlands Agency, Board of Finance, and Board of Selectmen. Mr. James asked how he could financially support the project; Ms. Anderson stated that the easiest way to support the project is to purchase and donate various supplies that will be needed for the development of the trail.

Mr. Dinnie spoke to the liability issues with which Mr. James is concerned, and shared that there is no precedent for successfully litigating for injuries on properties such as this. Mr. James said that he will likely have to put up boundary markers; Ms. Anderson shared that the Committee will be putting up "Private Property" boundary markers to help keep hikers on the public property, which should hopefully alleviate some of his concern. Mr. James also commented about the hours that the trail will be used; Ms. Anderson stated that there are no specific hours for Town trails, but noted that parks in Town are listed as "dawn to dusk." If there are concerns about improper use of the trail, Mr. James should alert the police.

Mr. James asked about the emergency process and procedures for hikers on the trails. Mr. Palshaw stated that once the trail is blazed, there will be emergency signs added at key points so that if there is an emergency, an individual will be able to let the first responders know where they are. Ms. Anderson added that the more activity and use that a trail has, the less vandalism and crime there tends to be.

Ms. Anderson shared a rough map with Mr. James, going over the design of the trail and noting the parking lot and gate that are planned. She pointed out the existing trail, the bridge that has been put in, the bench that has been added, and plans for the additional trail to be blazed. The process will be completed step by step; the blazing is being completed now, and then the boundary signs and emergency markers will be added. Mr. James asked about the project timeline and if the signage will be up this season. Ms.

Anderson stated that the Committee is hopeful that the signage will be up by the end of the year, but it is not guaranteed. Ms. Anderson assured Mr. James that she will be in contact with him once plans are solidified for adding the gate and the boundary signs; Mr. James thanked the Committee for the work that's being done and expressed his support for the trail and his appreciation for the answers to his questions.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. October 12, 2022

MOVED (VAN ZELM), SECONDED (MANFRE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 12, 2022 REGULAR MEETING.

IV. Old Business

A. Hockanum River Association Report

Most work is done for the season, unless any safety concerns arise, so equipment is being put away.

The south bridge needs to be realigned; this will likely be addressed in the spring. The south ramp has been fixed up nicely, but there is some wood that needs to be removed. Some additional touchups may be done in the spring, as well.

Ms. Anderson shared that it is unlikely that the Committee will receive an easement for the area around W9; as such, the Committee will need to put up boundary signage so that hikers know where the private property begins.

Mr. Palshaw asked the Committee to share an update in the spring; in the meantime, the emergency signs will be left as they are and private property signs will be put up.

B. New Maps Update

Emergency Services are onboard with not merging their maps with the Committee's.

Mr. Palshaw asked about emergency signage and creating a map for Crystal Ridge. Ms. Anderson said that once the first trail is completely blazed, a map can be made and emergency signage added.

C. Crystal Ridge Update

Ms. Anderson shared that the Committee plans to blaze the Trail, as is, now. This project is still being phased in. Phase One should be completely blazed by the end of November, assuming the good weather continues. The plan is to blaze the trail as it goes over a bridge; there is currently a rough trail that is hopefully going to be blazed in. Then, possibly the new trail can be taped as it goes by where all the quartz is. The Committee suggested naming the trail "Zack's Trail" and the bridge "Quartz Bridge." Ms. Anderson got the name of the individual who did the kiosks at Kimball, and she is hopeful that he will be willing to put in a kiosk at Crystal Ridge.

D. Metcalf

Ms. Anderson shared that nothing has been done yet, but First Selectman Spielman is pushing for the money as soon as possible, citing it as a big priority.

E. Conservation Commission Report

Nothing new was reported at this time.

F. Ellington Highlands Update

Ms. Anderson shared that the last bridge went over the swampy area; she emphasized the necessity of this bridge, given the area's likelihood to become swampy.

Mr. Palshaw inquired about when the trail would be blazed. Ms. Anderson responded that, with the leaves down and the Committee's comfort with the property, it is unlikely that blazing will occur before spring.

Ms. Anderson has checked with Mr. Radziwon about the parking lot, but it is not clear at this time when the parking lot will be completed.

G. Trail of Treats Update

Ms. Anderson shared that the event was very successful, with lots of positive buzz online; there were likely over 2,000 attendees. The Lions Club will be taking over the event in the future, but the Committee will be happy to support the event moving forward.

If members of the Committee have any suggestions, that can be shared during the meeting, or emailed along to the Lions Club. Ms. Anderson noted that the zigzag entrance could be reduced and lighting could be increased, especially along the arch. Adding orange cones by the arch would be helpful, as would be entrance arrows indicated at the road. Members of CERT were also very helpful in managing emergency aspects of the event. Adding a sign by the entrance to make the food donation spot clearer for attendees would be helpful. Ms. Allen suggested putting together a flier to give to parents to help advertise the participating vendors. Ms. Anderson said that the Lions Club is considering handing out a "save the date" card for parents next year. Ms. Allen also suggested putting some type of entertainment at the start of the event, to entertain families that show up early. Ms. Anderson said that she did try, but due to the limitations of high school students active in OKP, it wasn't able to happen. Ms. Wambolt-Gulick noted that the staggered arrival time worked well, and hopefully that will help alleviate early arrival families moving forward.

Ms. Wambolt-Gulick inquired about the size of the event. Ms. Anderson said that the number of attendees is closer to the first year the event was run, but not as large as it was in 2019. Ms. Wambolt-Gulick commented that was perhaps because of the rain date change, and that the amount of attendees felt very manageable yet still clearly popular. Ms. Anderson said that Dustin Huguenin wants to be more thoughtful about other events, sports practices, etc. that are scheduled at Robert Tedford Memorial Park on the same date.

Ms. Manfre shared that she was pleased to see so many Town Departments participating in the event. There were so many excellent vendor booths set up.

V. New Business

A. Dates for 2023 Meetings

Ms. Anderson shared that the Committee needs to submit the dates for 2023 meetings to the Town. She asked the members if the time should remain 6:30 pm or if it should be pushed up to 6:00 pm; the members agreed to keep the meeting time at 6:30 pm, and they will continue to schedule meetings for the first Wednesday of each month.

B. February 4, 2023 Mini Golf at Hall Memorial Library

Ms. Anderson asked the Committee about participating in this event. If the Committee wanted to participate, it would involve adding decorations around a hole in the course. Someone would need to commit to the event, and would need to commit to participating sometime within the month.

C. Welcome Bags

Ms. Anderson shared her thought about putting some of the trail maps into welcome bags for folks who move into Town.

VI. Subcommittee Reports

A. Treasurer

The current balance is \$6,886.44 – recent purchases have included paint for the lines at Trail of Treats and batteries that were needed for the event.

B. Planning & Development: No further updates were given.

C. Maintenance

Ms. Anderson reviewed the maintenance projects, including the Hockanum Bridge, a tree cut down by Mr. Dinnie at Stein, blazing Crystal Ridge, as previously mentioned, and the new bridge at Ellington Highlands.

Ms. Anderson reiterated that the Committee will be working on blazing and putting in a new trail at Crystal Ridge. Ms. Amsel and Mr. Dinnie would also like to purchase new equipment for maintaining trails.

There is pruning work to be done on the fruit trees at Batz. Ms. McCormick recommended reaching out in December or January to see if there is anyone with expertise to help with this.

Ms. Anderson wants to have the Batz parking lot plowed so that it can be more easily utilized for winter activities such as cross country skiing. She will reach out to Mr. Radziwon accordingly.

D. Community Outreach

1. Turkey Talk with Ginny Apple at Hall Memorial Library – November 7th at 6:30 pm

The event is definitely on. This will be focused on turkeys, and is kid-friendly; there are already a number of people signed up to attend.

VII. Adjournment

MOVED (MCCORMICK), SECONDED (VAN ZELM) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO
ADJOURN THE TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING AT 7:47 PM.

Prepared by the Committee; submitted by Julia Connor
Julia Connor

Subject:

FW: CT DEEP - Recreational Trails Grants RFP

DEEP Requests Proposals for Recreational Trails Grants

Program to Allocate \$9M; Applications due by March 1, 2023

(HARTFORD, CT) – Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is now accepting proposals for the State's Recreational Trails Grants. This request for applications is the largest funding round in the history of the Recreational Trails Grant program since it was established in 1997. It will make \$9 million available to improve Connecticut's trail infrastructure, which has seen significant usage increases since the onset of the pandemic. Applications will be accepted through March 1, 2023.

Trails are an important contributor to Connecticut's growing \$3.9 billion outdoor recreation economy, so their design, construction, expansion, and maintenance is a critical need.

Any private nonprofit organizations, municipalities, state departments, and tribal governments may apply. This grant program will help support communities' management of increases in trail usage that have endured as more residents and visitors are recreating on the more than 2,000 miles of multi-use trails and bike paths that crisscross the state.

DEEP has revamped the application and scoring to create more equitable competition for projects connecting Environmental Justice communities to the outdoors, and DEEP encourages organizations supporting these communities to apply. The updated application reviews whether proposed projects are in **DECD distressed municipalities**, evaluates "community connections" enhanced by proposals, and ensures community engagement in the project planning process.

Connecticut Recreational Trails program funds may be requested for uses including:

- Planning and design of trails
- Construction of new trails (motorized and non-motorized)
- Maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails (motorized and non-motorized)
- Access to trails by persons with disabilities
- Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment
- Acquisition of land or easements for a trail, or for trail corridors
- Operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection as related to recreational trails

Connecticut awarded a total of \$3 million in trail grants to 20 projects earlier this year during the last call for proposals. Those grants were selected by the Connecticut Greenways Council from among 65 applications, and awarded amounts ranged from \$2,023 to \$457,100. Examples of the various projects selected included:

- A grant to the City of Danbury for a multiuse trail route planning
- Funding maintenance of the Hockanum River Trail in Vernon

- A boardwalk replacement at Dinosaur State Park in Rocky Hill

Visit <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Outdoor-Recreation/Trails/CRT--Funding> for details and applications. DEEP will hold a webinar on January 11, 2023, to provide an overview on the CT Recreational Trails Grant program and application; you can register [HERE](#). For further information contact, Kimberly Bradley, DEEP Recreational Trails & Greenways Program, at (860) 424-3938.

See Full Press Release Here: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/News-Releases/News-Releases---2022/DEEP-Requests-Proposals-for-Recreational-Trails-Grants>

Kimberly Bradley

CT State Parks Trails & Greenways Program
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106-5127

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[Recreational Trails Program](#)

[CT Greenways Program](#)

Approved



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CONSERVATION COMMISSION 2023 MEETING SCHEDULE

All meetings are held in the Town Hall Annex at 7:00 PM

1/10

2/14

3/14

4/11

5/02 (5/09 – Annual Town Budget Meeting)

6/13

7/11

8/08

9/12

10/10

11/14

12/12

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council



Dear Lisa,

I hope you are enjoying some restful holiday time with those near and dear to you. Before the year got away from me, I wanted to say thank you so much for all you do to support CLCC.

Your contributions enable CLCC to provide direct financial and technical assistance, networking, advocacy, and other services that help Connecticut land trusts to conserve more land and ensure it stays protected forever.

We couldn't do it without you.

I look forward to working with you to strengthen land conservation efforts in communities all across the state in this new year.

Thank you for your support, and for all you do,

*Vanessa Giannasi
Development Director
vgiannasi@ctconservation.org*