



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187
www.ellington-ct.gov

Tel. 860-870-3120 Town Planner's Office Fax. 860-870-3122

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2023, 7:00 PM

IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT

REMOTE ATTENDANCE: VIA ZOOM MEETING, INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED BELOW

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Review Plan of Conservation & Development, Chapter 4 - Conservation Strategies, Natural Resource Preservation & Identify Considerations/Strategies for Action. (*Distributed January 10, 2023*)
 - a. Develop strategies for raising awareness about open space and farmland preservation efforts and benefits.
2. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program.
 - a. Farmland Preservation Brochure, Revised April 2023.
 - b. Open Space/Farmland/Recreational Assets Inventory, Revised April 2023.
 - c. May Town Newsletter Article.
3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.
 - a. May Town Newsletter Article.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 22-23 Budget & Expenditure Update.
2. Approval of the April 11, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes.
3. Executive session for purpose of discussing potential open space real estate acquisitions.
4. Correspondence/Discussion:
 - a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Monthly Agendas/Minutes.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting is June 13, 2023.

Instructions to attend remotely via Zoom Meeting listed below. The agenda is posted on the Town of Ellington webpage (www.ellington-ct.gov) under Agenda & Minutes, Conservation Commission.

Join Zoom Meeting via link:

Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82704635844>

Meeting ID: 827 0463 5844

Passcode: 128999

Join Zoom Meeting by phone:

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

Meeting ID: 827 0463 5844

Passcode: 128999

Ellington Conservation Commission
Ellington Planning Department
Town Hall Annex, 57 Main Street
(860) 870-3120
planner@ellington-ct.gov

OPEN SPACE AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Development of land increases population and intensifies land use and the need for more open space. Town-owned open space provides pleasant views and preserves community character, provides opportunities for passive, active, and competitive recreation, and forested open space filters air and water and provides habitat for wildlife.

The three main mechanisms for acquiring open space land are through development proposals, purchases of land, or acceptance of land donations. Development proposals subject to open space requirements may set aside land or pay a fee-in-lieu of land dedication. Open space fees are deposited into a special fund and can only be used for open space land acquisition. Ellington's Open Space Fund balance is approximately \$520,000 for town-wide land acquisitions and almost \$204,000 for land purchases near Shenipsit State Forest.

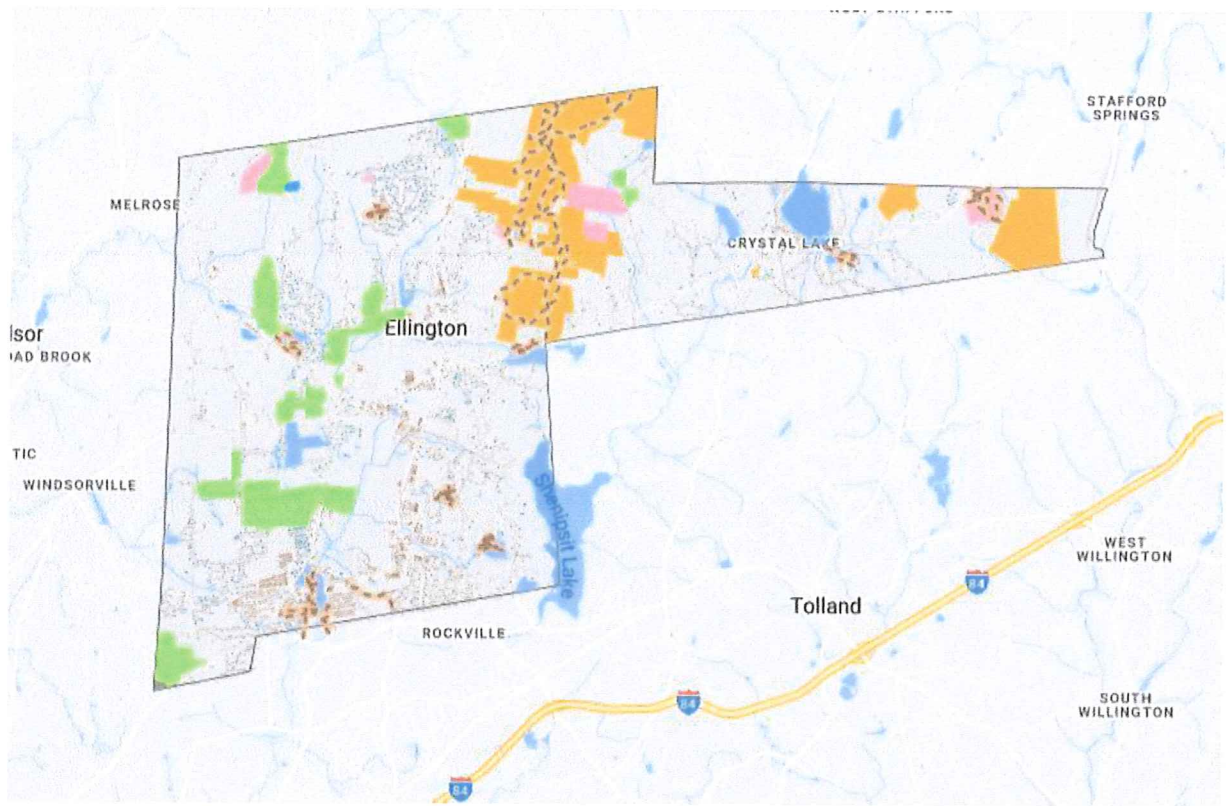
To see locations of town-owned open space and recreational opportunities please visit <https://ellingtonct.mapgeo.io/>.

The Ellington Conservation Commission is pleased to announce permanent protection of 101.83 acres of farmland owned and managed by Oakridge Dairy, the largest dairy farm in Connecticut. An easement has been placed over the land permanently preserving it as farmland. The land is generally located on the north and south sides of Meadow Brook Road and the west side of Hoffman Road.

With support from Ellington electors, the Town partnered with the Department of Agriculture, the Connecticut Farmland Trust, and the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service to protect the farmland.

Open space and farmland preservation are important programs that help stabilize local taxes. An in-depth analysis of town revenues and expenditures was conducted in 2018 and concluded that for every \$1.00 collected in taxes the cost for town services for residential land cost \$1.13, but only cost \$0.27 for open space and farmland.

Thank you for supporting open space and farmland preservation efforts. To learn more about preservation programs, please contact the Ellington Planning Department.



INVENTORY OF OPEN SPACE, FARMLAND, AND RECREATIONAL ASSETS

(NOT INCLUDING GOLF COURSES AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS)

DESCRIPTION	OWNER	AREA (ac.)
Pinney and Windermere (Including Pinney Street Fields)	Town	67.71
Hockanum River Linear Parcel	Town	8.87
Carriage Hill Open Space	Town	18.51
Crystal Ridge Estates Open Space	Town	52.41
Crystal View Estates Open Space	Town	35.3
Ellington Highlands Open Space	Town	33.24
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 Property	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" Property**	Town	73.75
Schlude Property**	Town	11.46
Arbor Park	Town	3.3
Veterans Memorial Park (Main Street)	Town	0.63
Tedford Memorial Park	Town	41.42
Sandy Beach	Town	7.23
Veterans Memorial Park (Crystal Lake)	Town	0.24
Porter Road Highlands	Town	3.16
Other Town Open Lands	Town	21.87
Properties Taken In Lieu of Taxes	Town	30.18
Subtotal		576.44
Bellante (Sandy Beach Road)	NC Land Trust	35.76
Wright (Webster Road)	NC Land Trust	116.43
Pearl	NC Land Trust	11.78
Sunset Hill	NC Land Trust	14
Swann Farm	NC Land Trust	56.21
Joy Property	NC Land Trust	6.87
Shenipsit Woods	NC Land Trust	29.73
Ernie Boothroyd Preserve	NC Land Trust	58
Wapping Wood Bird Sanctuary	SW Land Trust	7.6
Subtotal		336.38
Way Farm	PDR	68.6
Culbro Farm	PDR	171.09
Burke Farm	PDR	119.4
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	124.42
Bahler Farm	PDR	125.78
Oakridge Dairy Farm (Jobs Hill Rd, Meadow Brook Rd, Hoffman Rd - Farm 1)	PDR	101.83
Oakridge Dairy Farm (Jobs Hill Rd - Farm 3)	PDR	51.82
Wright Farm	PDR/CFT	36.62
Subtotal		1079.47
Shenipsit State Forest	State	1509.49
Nye Holman State Forest	State	361.21
Bradway Reservoir	State	87.93
Boat Launch, Crystal Lake	State	4.81
Subtotal		1963.44
Crystal Lake		175.51
Shenipsit Lake	Conn. Water	170.91
Other Water Company Open Lands	Conn. Water	154.18
Subtotal		500.6
TOTAL =		4456.33

*Included in open space totals

**May be used for municipal puposes

Journal Inquirer

\$2

SERVING NORTH-CENTRAL CONNECTICUT FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS

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The JI tells it like it is. Somebody has to.

TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2023

www.JournalInquirer.com

OFF THE BRIDGE



Jim Michaud / Journal Inquirer

Vernon firefighters and police check out a car that went into the Tankerhoosen River around 11:30 a.m. Monday in the Talcottville section of Vernon at the entrance to the Talcottville Apartments. The driver was taken from the scene by ambulance for evaluation.

Dry forecast ups brush fire risk

By Joseph Villanova
jvillanova@journalinquirer.com

Forecasts of dry, windy and unusually hot weather this week are causing concern for public safety officials who are warning that conditions are ripe for an outbreak of brush and forest fires.

Firefighters in Hebron already have felt the

effects, battling a blaze that consumed 16 acres of dry grassland Sunday that spread to vehicles and an outbuilding.

The state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection issued a red flag warning today for all counties in Connecticut, with a "very high" forest fire danger level.

■ SEE RED FLAG / PAGE 3

101 acres preserved

Portion of Oakridge Dairy to be protected from development

By Susan Danseyar
sdanseyar@journalinquirer.com

ELLINGTON — A crucial parcel of Oakridge Dairy will be permanently protected as farmland by an easement that prevents it from ever being developed.

The easement for the 101-acre parcel — along Jobs Hill Road, Muddy Brook Road, and Hoffman Road — was purchased by the state Department of Agriculture in cooperation with Connecticut Farmland Trust, the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the town of Ellington.

This is the second parcel of the dairy farm to be protected in perpetuity, according to the Agriculture Department — 52 acres were protected in 2021 — and an easement on a third parcel is expected for a total 250 acres, state officials said.

The 101 acres is used for growing corn and hay to feed the farm's 2,600 Holstein dairy cows, which are milked three times a day.

According to the farm's website, one cow eats 100 pounds of food and drinks 50 gallons of water per day, and it requires one acre to feed a cow and a calf for a year.

"Ensuring that our land is permanently protected is important to the future of agriculture, not only for our busi-

ness but also for our community, which values open space," Oakridge Dairy CEO Seth Bahler said. "By taking this step, it allows us to reinvest the easement dollars into our dairy operation for future projects and support farming operations for generations to come."

Oakridge Dairy provides milk to Guida's Dairy in New Britain and through the Modern Milkman, its weekly subscription service for milk from cows milked less than 24 hours before along with local farm eggs, butter, yogurt, and cheese.

Agriculture Commissioner Bryan P. Hurlburt said the collaboration between local, state, and federal partners — in concert with the landowner — is critical to advancing the protection of working farmlands in the state.

"I commend Seth Bahler, recently named Connecticut's outstanding young farmer in 2023, for having the vision to pursue this process as part of (Oakridge Dairy's) overall business plan and community outreach in an area with a growing residential property," Hurlburt said. "This provides a key connection to consumers having access to, and visibility of, where their food comes from locally."

■ SEE FARMLAND / PAGE 3

TOLLAND

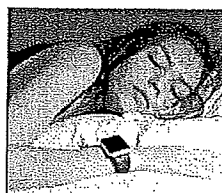
Injured bald eagle rescued, euthanized

PAGE 3

NATION/WORLD

Tennessee lawmaker reinstated

PAGE 8



HEALTHY LIVING

Wearables can get you a good night's sleep

PAGE 20



SPORTS

Sénéchal, Juhász picked in WNBA draft

PAGE 48

Dry weather, brisk winds make dangerous combo

■ RED FLAG

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Bill Leatham, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Norton, Massachusetts, said high temperatures combined with low relative humidity and gusty winds have led to the warning, intended to discourage any outdoor burning.

Leatham said there is no information on potential red flag warnings later in the week, as it's done on a daily basis depending on conditions, but the weather forecast presents the likelihood of a definite fire risk in the coming days.

Residents in north-central Connecticut can expect temperatures today and on Wednesday to reach the low to mid-70s, he said, with Thursday expected to hit low- to mid-80s and Friday rising to the upper 80s.

Dry conditions are making matters worse. The last time measurable precipitation was recorded in the area was on April 1, Leatham said, with a trace of precipitation detected on April 5 and 6.

"Unfortunately, especially for the fire risk, it doesn't look like until later Saturday into Sunday that we'd get a spot of precipitation in the area," Leatham said.

Wednesday is expected to be less dry but windier, he said. Thursday and Friday should see lower winds in the area, but the low humidity and high temperatures are projected to continue.

Fire weather concerns began last week, with DEEP issuing a red flag warning Friday with a "very high" forest fire risk.

On Monday the Hebron Fire Department posted on Facebook that local crews put out a 16.7-

acre brush fire Sunday, with mutual aid from towns including Andover, Bolton, and Glastonbury.

Bolton Fire Chief Bruce Dixon said outdoor fires rely on weather conditions, and wind was a major factor in the Hebron brush fire on Sunday.

"The wind can make all the difference, as far as how you are able to take control," Dixon said.

Dixon said brush fires and forest fires could easily start from small leaf fires or backyard campfires when the wind picks up embers or tinder, and can quickly spread flames across acres.

He said the town posts red flag warnings on the electronic sign at the fire station, as well as information about burn permits.

Dixon said the fire department has added more supplies onto their trucks in response to the red flag warning, and some of the town's firefighters were recently certified at a DEEP forest fire course.

He warned residents to take precautions with any outdoor fires, and those with specific questions about burning or permits should contact their local fire marshals or burn officials, and check the DEEP website for more information.

East Hartford Assistant Fire Chief Jay Silver said that his town was more concerned about building fires, and suggested residents stay cool as the temperatures rise.

"From a people perspective without being acclimated to warmer temperatures, make sure you're well hydrated and take care of yourself," Silver said.

across New England raising not only dairy cows, but also growing tobacco and potatoes as cash crops.

Today, Oakridge concentrates on its dairy business and in 2016 built a 318,000-square-foot facility for its cows and milking operation.



This screenshot from a state police video shows an injured bald eagle on Interstate 84 near the Tolland-Vernon town line that was rescued Saturday.

Connecticut State Police

Bald eagle rescued from I-84 by state police euthanized by rescue center

By Jamila Young

jyoung@journalinquirer.com

TOLLAND — State troopers and a local animal control officer captured an injured American bald eagle stranded on the highway over the weekend, but despite their efforts, the bird had to be euthanized.

State police said that around 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, officers from the Troop C barracks were dispatched to locate the hurt eagle at the Vernon-Tolland town line on Interstate 84 eastbound.

Troop C Dispatcher Kimberly Gambacorta, who is also a local animal control officer, assisted in capturing the large bird.

The eagle, identified as female, was brought to Horizon Wings Raptor Rehabilitation and Education in Ashford.

"We treated her for shock and pain with subcutaneous fluids and pain medication," said MaryBeth Kaeser, president and owner of Horizon Wings.

"My vet on hand, Dr. Ann Bourke of Northeast Bird Clinic in Ashford also gave the bird a quick examination, and we decided to send it to Tufts for further evaluation," said Kaeser.

The bird's foot was definitely broken, but more X-rays were needed to evaluate other issues and how bad the injury was, Kaeser said.

Dr. Maureen Murray, director of Tufts Wildlife Clinic at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, said that the eagle appeared to have been hit by a car and had a fractured leg at its hock joint.

"Veterinarians at the clinic

performed a physical examination and took radiographs of the eagle," said Murray.

"Sadly, because of the proximity to the joint, the prognosis for repair of the fracture and restoration of normal, pain-free mobility was very poor," said Murray.

"While the clinic's primary goal is always to treat and release its patients back into the wild, due to the severity of the injury, the difficult but humane decision to euthanize the bird was made," said Murray.

State police said the eagle was found in the center median strip of the highway, and they were able to slow and move traffic around the site so it could be safely captured without further injury to the bird or the public.

Stone Academy campuses in East Hartford, Waterbury, West Haven listed for sale

By Andrew Larson

Hartford Business Journal

Stone Academy, which abruptly closed in February and is being investigated by Attorney General William Tong for possible violations of the Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act, has put its three campuses on the market.

Amodio & Co. Real Estate, based in New Britain, is listing the for-profit nursing school's former campuses in East Hartford, Waterbury and West Haven for sale, or for lease.

The East Hartford campus, at

745 and 763 Burnside Ave., features 17,315 square feet of educational space across three buildings on 3.9 acres, with a paved parking lot and 95 spaces. The site could be used as an academic campus, assisted living facility or multifamily conversion, the listing says. The property is also home to the school's former corporate offices.

The West Haven campus, at 560 Sawmill Road, spans 27,486 square feet on 2.4 acres, with 115 parking spaces. The property sits along Interstate 95, which has average daily traffic

of 107,900 vehicles, according to the listing.

The Waterbury campus, at 101 Pierpont Road, contains 12,596 square feet on 2.5 acres across three buildings near Interstate 84. It has more than 116 parking spaces and 192 solar electric panels.

Stone Academy closed amid concerns about its National Council Licensure Examination rates, faculty qualifications and clinical training.

Last week, Tong sought a court order to force the owners of Stone Academy to comply with an ongoing investigation.

Dairy farm operated by family for 5 generations

■ FARMLAND

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Oakridge is the largest dairy farm in the state and is now run by the family's fifth generation. Adolph Bahler founded the dairy in the late 1890s and it was one of many small farms

Town of Ellington

General Ledger - On Demand Report

Fiscal Year: 2022-2023 From Date: 7/1/2022 To Date: 4/25/2023

Account Mask: ?????00270???????

☒ Print accounts with zero balance

Account Type: All

☐ Include Inactive Accounts

☐ Filter Encumbrance Detail by Date Range

☐ Print Detail

☐ Include PreEncumbrance

Account Number / Description

Account Number / Description	Budget	Range To Date	YTD	Balance	Encumbrance	% Remaining	Budget Balance
1000.02.00270.10.50103	\$1,600.00	\$780.00	\$780.00	\$820.00	\$0.00	51.25%	\$820.00

Part Time---Conservation Commission--

1000.02.00270.20.60221	\$400.00	(\$400.00)	(\$400.00)	\$800.00	\$0.00		\$800.00
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Advertising Printing---Conservation Commission--

1000.02.00270.20.60222	\$1,350.00	\$560.00	\$560.00	\$790.00	\$0.00	58.52%	\$790.00
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Dues & Subscriptions---Conservation Commission--

1000.02.00270.20.60223	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00
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Travel---Conservation Commission--

1000.02.00270.20.60234	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00
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Professional Development---Conservation Commission

1000.02.00270.20.60250	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00
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Contracted Services---Conservation Commission--

1000.02.00270.20.60254	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00
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St of CT Surcharges---Conservation Commission--

1000.02.00270.20.60341	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00
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Office Supplies---Conservation Commission--

1000.02.00270.30.60341	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00
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Office Supplies---Conservation Commission--

Fund: 1000	\$3,350.00	\$940.00	\$940.00	\$2,410.00	\$0.00		\$2,410.00
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Town of Ellington

General Ledger - On Demand Report

Account Mask: ?????00270??????

☒

Print accounts with zero balance

Account Type: All

☐

Include Inactive Accounts

Budget Range To Date

Grand Total:

\$3,350.00

\$940.00

\$940.00

\$2,410.00

\$0.00

\$2,410.00

End of Report



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2023, 7:00 PM

REMOTE ATTENDANCE: ZOOM MEETING

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Members George Nickerson, Robert Zielfelder, Sean Dwyer, James Gage, and Laurie Burstein (arrived 7:09pm)

ABSENT: Alternates Ann Harford and Jessica Fay

STAFF: John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner Enforcement Officer, and Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk

OTHERS

PRESENT: Valerie Amsel, Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee Liaison

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. (Distributed January 10, 2023)

Commissioner Gage said it looked good, although the commission agreed to discuss this agenda item next month when the group has more time to review it. Mr. Colonese said he would relay any conversation or comments from the commission to Ms. Houlihan. Commissioner Nickerson asked if the commission was reviewing all of Chapter 4 or just a portion of it. Mr. Colonese confirmed it was the entire chapter.

2. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program.

- a. Notice of Acquisition of Development Rights, Oakridge Dairy, Farm I, for 101.83 acres, Recorded March 16, 2023.

Mr. Colonese said the Notice was recorded on land records. The farmland easement is over the northern portion of 76 Jobs Hill Road, 80, 87 and 115 Meadow Brook Road, and 8 Hoffman Road. The Planning Department will update the farmland brochure and the open space inventory with the new acquisition. Ms. Amsel said there was an article about the acquisition in the *Journal Inquirer* today. Mr. Colonese said the properties known as Farm I and Farm III of Oakridge Dairy have been preserved through farmland preservation.

- b. Request for Referral to Board of Selectmen for Special Appropriation for Farmland Preservation, Oakridge Dairy, Farm II, for 101 +/- acres, June 2018 Application.

Mr. Colonese said that in 2018, when Oakridge Dairy applied for farmland preservation, the proposed total acreage was 270 acres, which was Farms, I, II, and III. Farm II, which is 103 acres, was not included at the time. The Department of Agriculture recently cleared the remaining acreage for preservation and asked the town if they would like to be a funding partner for 10% of the value of the development rights. That amount would be \$49,833. Ms. Houlihan confirmed with the finance officer that it would be more cost effective to seek a special appropriation versus a bond authorization. This farmland was not ready for preservation in 2018 because of some ongoing restoration projects, but it is ready now. Mr. Colonese said Ms. Houlihan wanted to ask the commission if they would like to refer this request for special appropriation for farmland preservation to the Board of Selectmen. The commission agreed to refer the request to the Board.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO REFER TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN A REQUEST FOR SPECIAL APPROPRIATION FOR PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION FOR 101 +/- ACRES OF LAND GENERALLY REFERRED TO AS APN 091-003-0000, MEADOW BROOK ROAD, OAKRIDGE DAIRY, LLC, OWNER.

- c. Seth Bahler, Oakridge Dairy and The Modern Milkman, Recognized as Young Farmer of the Year 2023, Ag Day at the State Capitol (open link for video).

Mr. Colonese said he would send the link to the video to the commissioners.

At Ms. Houlihan's request, Mr. Colonese shared an update on the status of the February 23rd letter of interest for farmland preservation. There are some properties being considered for farmland preservation, such as 53 Wapping Wood Road. Ms. Houlihan sent one property owner the application and the owner will talk with additional owners to see if they consent to the application. Ms. Houlihan is waiting for a call back from Roberta Hambach regarding her property on Broad Brook Road. Ms. Houlihan is also working with the owners at 267 Jobs Hill Road, which is 44.89 acres, of which approximately 50% is farmland soil. She will provide an application to the owner.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

- a. Open Space Brochure, Revised October 2022.

The commission discussed strategies to increase awareness about open space preservation efforts and the benefits of open space. Ms. Amsel said the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee can hand out the open space brochures at the town's Earth Day event on April 22nd. The commission also noted that the Ellington Farmer's Market would be a good venue to increase awareness. Mr. Colonese added that the next town newsletter will be issued at the beginning of May and said a statement of open space benefits can be included. He asked the commissioners if they had any additional content to suggest. Chairman Quarno said the recent Oakridge Dairy farmland preservation should be included in the newsletter as well.

At last month's meeting, the commission asked about the amount of money in the open space fund. Mr. Colonese reported there is \$741,954 in the fund, of which

\$203,597 was from the State in 2007 for land purchase within the Shenipsit Forest. The \$203,597 is intended to be used for open space preservation for land in the vicinity of the Shenipsit State Forest.

Mr. Colonese said efforts are underway with Green Road property owners. There will be updates provided at future meetings. Commissioner Gage noted he had a meeting with Ms. Houlihan on the matter.

Commissioner Gage reported the Northern Connecticut Land Trust is currently working on properties in Stafford.

b. Guide To Open Space Recommendation.

Mr. Colonese said the guide is for informational purposes for the commission to review.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 22-23 Budget & Expenditure Update

There are no new charges in the budget except for the part-time recording clerk services.

2. Approval of the March 14, 2023, regular meeting minutes.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (BURSTEIN) TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 14, 2023, WITH VARIOUS CORRECTIONS.

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Monthly Agendas/Minutes.

Ms. Amsel said the trails committee is working to get Metcalf reopened. The trails have been blown and the group is getting ready to install the emergency locator signs. The committee recently blazed a new trail at Crystal Ridge. A 16-ft bridge that was recently installed at Highlands was destroyed due to vandalism. Commissioner Nickerson asked if the town could put cameras on the trails. Vice Chairman Bidwell said that there is a wildlife camera in the area, but the camera did not capture anybody suspected of vandalism. Ms. Amsel said she sent a picture of the wreckage to First Selectman Lori Spielman.

b. March 30, 2023, Notice of Public Hearing for May 18, 2023, Connecticut Siting Council for Petition 1558 - Request for Declaratory Ruling for a 4 MW Photovoltaic Facility, 24 Middle Road, Ellington.

Mr. Colonese shared the hearing notice with the commission. The hearing will be held over Zoom. Those who want to participate in the meeting need to sign up by May 17, 2023.

Mr. Colonese stated that Ms. Houlihan asked if the commission wanted to continue remote or return to hybrid (in-person and remote availability) meetings. Mr. Colonese noted remote meetings have taken place the last few months and prior to that they were hybrid although few people attended in-person. Mr. Colonese said Ms. Houlihan heard from Ann Harford, and Ann's feeling is that remote meetings don't create personal contact that is conducive to good conversation and new ideas. He added

there should be a consensus direction on the venue for future meetings. Commissioner Burstein said that participating virtually works best for her schedule at this time. Chairman Quarno said she favored hybrid meetings to allow for members to stay engaged. Commissioner Zielfelder said he would favor hybrid meetings if some previous technology issues can be resolved. The commission decided to hold a hybrid meeting next month.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

**MOVED (ZIELFELDER) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSES UNANIMOUSLY TO
ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:54 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
DONNA ALLEN

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
April 5, 2023
Town Hall Annex

MEMBERS PRESENT: Donna Allen, Valerie Amsel, Linda Anderson, Larrissa Burke, Judi Manfre, Pam McCormick, Cynthia van Zelm, Deanna Wambolt-Gulick

OTHERS PRESENT: Bruce Dinnie, Tom Palshaw, Lindsay Neubecker

I. Call to Order

Ms. Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

II. Citizens' Forum

Lindsay Neubecker, a prospective member of the Committee, shared her involvement in Town and her interest in joining the Committee.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. March 1, 2023

MOVED (VAN ZELM), SECONDED (ALLEN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 1, 2023 MEETING.

IV. Old Business

A. Hockanum River Association Report

Mr. Dinnie shared that today had been the first day of big work on the trails. The rotten wood in the stairs behind The Gold & Diamond Exchange was replaced, and a tree that had been crossing the Windermere Trail was cleaned off. The Association is currently generating a list of projects, including replacing the W4 bench, rebuilding a bridge on the Windermere Trail in a higher and drier location, and designing a ramp for the Sullivan Tire Bridge.

B. Metcalf Update

Ms. Amsel shared that she and Mr. Dinnie walked the trails and noticed that the blazing on the trails (blue) does not match the map (peach.) Ms. Amsel recommended updating the map once the locator signs are added. Ms. Amsel also shared that she cleared leaves and did some preening on the trails, and she noted that prickly bushes and other things sticking up along the trail will need to be dealt with.

Mr. Palshaw gave an update about the history of a foundation that is located at the trail, sharing the history through the years, and showing aerial photos from 1934 which indicated that there likely used to be a house among the property. He suggested adding a history notation by the feature as the Committee learns more about the former owners of the property.

Ms. Anderson plans to hold a ribbon-cutting to reopen the trail and to thank those that helped secure the funding to clear the hazards and get the trail opened back up.

C. Conservation Commission Report

Ms. Amsel shared that the Conservation Commission would like to work more closely with the Committee; they are hoping to put out some literature along with the trails information at the Earth Day event. The Conservation also asked if they could become more involved with the Trails events, especially hikes. Ms. Amsel offered them the opportunity to include information in the Committee's newsletter submissions or Facebook page.

D. Ellington Highlands Update – Disc Golf

Ms. Anderson shared that the public Inlands/Wetlands Agency meeting to discuss the proposed disc golf course was moved to the May 8 agenda, which is still within the required timeframe, but the decision on this project will need to be moved on quickly. The Planning and Zoning Commission has already declared a public hearing on the disc golf project; their meeting on this was postponed, and if the Inland/Wetlands Agency approves, there may need to be a special Planning and Zoning meeting to approve the project.

Mr. Palshaw shared some research he did into finding an alternative location for the disc golf course, and he asked if anyone knew anything about the following properties: Carriage Hill (18.5 acres), Crystal View, Meadowbrook Estates (15.3 acres), Grassy Hill Road (35 acres), Crystal Lake and Pinnacle Road, Middle Road. Ms. Anderson shared that she checked out the most promising property, on Grassy Hill Road, and that she personally doesn't think it would work well for the project; it is placed along a neighborhood cul-de-sac and is very hilly. Ms. Wambolt-Gulick shared that the Crystal Lake/Pinnacle Road property is heavily wooded and would face safety concerns with the intersection and sightlines as is. The Committee recognized that the Middle Road property has faced resistance with past proposed projects due to neighborhood concerns.

Ms. Anderson shared that there is a need to increase the amount of conservation in Town; the Conservation Commission is reportedly aiming to preserve 21% of space in Ellington, as recommended by the State. However, Ellington is only at 17% currently. Ellington Highlands is currently included in that percentage, and Ms. Anderson expressed concern that if the disc golf course was placed there, would it still be considered open space? Mr. Palshaw shared that athletic fields are considered open space, so the property would continue to qualify as such.

V. New Business

A. Bluebird Houses

Ms. Anderson shared that some Girl Scouts reached out asking to make bat houses; she suggested bluebird houses instead, which the Scouts will make and install. The Scout Leader has done some research on the topic; they are also planning to make some houses for sparrows so

that they don't compete with the bluebirds. These would be installed at Batz, by the back field or by the amphitheater.

B. Eagle Scout

Ms. Anderson shared with the Scout that the Committee needs several bridges and kiosks built for different trails; she is waiting to hear back from him to see what projects he might be interested in. Ms. Amsel recommended the Crystal Ridge Trail. Ms. Anderson also suggested putting identification tags on trees and spots of interest at the Batz Property. There is also a solar pump at Batz that Ms. Anderson suggested as a project idea.

C. Trails Committee Recommitment

Ms. McCormick is not recommitting for the upcoming term. Ms. Anderson reminded members to reach out if they do not intend to recommit to serving on the Committee.

VI. Subcommittee Reports

A. Treasurer

There were no updates at this time.

B. Planning & Development

The laminated maps will include QR codes; the lamination should help them hold up in bad weather. The signs will say "Trail Map" and the bottom will say "QR Code", and stickers will be placed on the signs.

C. Maintenance

1. Batz

Ms. Amsel shared that Committee members have been cutting roses at Batz, and she is working on sanding the kiosk as it is looking dingy and worn. She is also hoping to stain the kiosk, as it will penetrate better and last longer. She fixed a screw that had fallen out of the plexiglass of the kiosk. Ms. Anderson also shared that Mr. Dinnie took care of five downed trees at the property. Mr. Palshaw inquired about the hanging branch up in a tree by the trail; Ms. Anderson was unsure if it was still up and will check on it. Ms. Amsel stated that Batz is in very good shape right now.

Kimball is next on the list to be evaluated. Ms. Anderson would also like to get out to the Crystal Ridge Trail and finish blazing, with Mr. Dinnie to help leaf-blow the trail.

Ms. Amsel shared that roots need to be cleaned up at Metcalf.

D. Community Outreach

1. Ginny Apple Talk on Moose

Ms. Anderson shared that it went well and was well-attended with at least 20 people.

2. Ginny Apple Talk on Deer -- April 25th

Ms. Anderson shared details about this event, and that she is hoping to have Ginny do another talk sometime in May.

3. Earth Day – April 22nd – Committee Members/Set Up/Table

Ms. Anderson asked which of the members is available to work the event and when; set up begins at 8:00 am, and the event runs from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Ms. Anderson plans to be there for the duration of the event; Ms. Amsel would like to help with setup and will stay until noon. Ms. Allen will be there from noon to 2:00 pm. Anyone else from the Committee is welcome to come and help!

Ms. Anderson made laminated maps to have at the table and has 150 packets of trail maps available to hand out. She will also bring another set of materials to display, including nature items to look at. Ms. Amsel will bring an antler to have people look at, as well.

4. Birdwatch – April 29th at 7:30 am

Ms. van Zelm reminded the Committee of this upcoming event; Ms. Allen suggested making up event flyers to have at Earth Day.

5. Trails Day

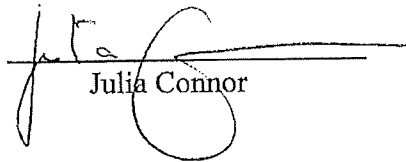
Ms. van Zelm asked about the details of this event. Usually, the Committee holds a hike at 9:00 or 10:00 am on a Saturday in June. Ms. Manfre will lead the hike, and Ms. Allen will help as well; it will take place at Crystal Ridge Trail. The Committee selected Saturday, June 3rd at 10:00 am; if there is rain, it will be cancelled. No dogs will be permitted. Ms. van Zelm will need an address to direct people to, as well as parking directions. She clarified that this hike is hilly and moderately challenging; hikers should be instructed to wear good hiking shoes and bug spray. The hike will likely take about an hour.

Mr. Dinnie suggested that the Committee print up a sign to help direct people; it could say “Ellington Trails Committee Hike” or “Hike Starts Here.” This type of sign could be reused for many other hiking events. Ms. Anderson will check to see if the Committee already has something that could serve this purpose.

VII. Adjournment

MOVED (VAN ZELM), SECONDED (WAMBOLT-GULICK) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING AT 7:49 PM.

Prepared by Deanna Wambolt-Gulick, Secretary; submitted by


Julia Connor