



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2023, 7:00 PM

PRESENT: In-Person: Chairman Rebecca Quarno and Alternate Ann Harford
Remote Attendance: Regular Members George Nickerson and James Gage

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Members Robert Zielfelder, Sean Dwyer and Laurie Burstein, and Alternate Jessica Fay

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

OTHERS

PRESENT: None

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. 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.

Ms. Houlihan recapped that John Colonese, Assistant Planner Enforcement Officer, sat in for her last month and provided the commission guidance from a report she prepared. She said last month there was some confusion as to why this item was on the agenda. This section is the commission's chapter from the Plan of Conservation and Development, which lists suggested strategies for action by the group. Currently they want to work on strategies for increasing awareness about open space and farmland preservation. Chairman Quarno said it makes sense to leave this section on the agenda as a standing item so the commission can revisit it for action.

In response to the commission's directive to notify the public about the fund for open space purchases, information will be included in the May 2023 newsletter. Ms. Houlihan said the fund currently has \$724,000 in it. Almost \$204,000 of that amount is earmarked for land purchases near Shenipsit State Forest. Chairman Quarno asked if it would be more impactful to the average reader to simply say that the fund had \$724,000 instead of a breakdown of \$520,000 for town-wide land acquisitions and \$204,000 for purchases near Shenipsit State Forest. Ms. Houlihan said this information has already been submitted, but that it could be adjusted the next time it is written. The deadline for submissions to be printed in monthly newsletters is on or about the 24th day of the prior month.

To increase awareness about the commission's open space and farmland preservation programs, Chairman Quarno asked about securing a booth at the Farmer's Market for the Conservation Commission. She said if the group can get a booth, then the commission can consider ideas for what to hand out to patrons. Ms. Houlihan will contact the Farmers Market for potential dates for a booth.

2. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program.

a. Farmland Preservation Brochure, Revised April 2023.

Ms. Houlihan said the farmland preservation brochure was revised to include the preservation of Farm 1 from Oakridge Dairy, LLC, which was 101 acres.

b. Open Space/Farmland/Recreational Assets Inventory, Revised April 2023.

This is a page from the Plan of Conservation, which lists that a total amount of 4,456.33 acres of land is preserved in Ellington.

c. May Town Newsletter Article.

An article in the *Journal Inquirer* dated April 11, 2023, detailed the preservation of Farm 1, which is 101 acres, for Oakridge Dairy, LLC. Ms. Houlihan said this process stemmed from a 2016 application where the farm wanted to preserve about 400 acres and was separated into three different farm easements.

The commission voted on preserving Farm 2 from Oakridge Dairy, LLC. last month, which is about 101 acres. Chairman Quarno asked if the remaining process will be long. Ms. Houlihan said it would not because it has been through a lot of the vetting process already and that funding approval is needed to continue. Ms. Houlihan will be looking to present to the Board of Selectmen for funding approval on Monday, May 8 at 6:30PM, if she can meet the deadline otherwise the presentation will be in June.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

a. May Town Newsletter Article.

The Open Space Preservation Program was referenced in the town newsletter article.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 22-23 Budget & Expenditure Update.

The only expenditure between last month and this month is for recording clerk services. Next month, there will be an expenditure for open space brochures included in the budget.

2. Approval of the April 11, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (NICKERSON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 11, 2023, AS WRITTEN.

3. Executive session for purpose of discussing potential open space real estate acquisitions.

MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (QUARNO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:28PM FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE ACQUISITIONS INVITING COMMISSION MEMBERS, THE RECORDING CLERK, AND THE TOWN PLANNER.

MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (QUARNO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:53PM. NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS WERE MADE DURING THE EXECUTIVE SESSION.

4. Correspondence/Discussion:

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

According to Commissioner Harford, the bridge on the Hockanum River trail was built and the bench was fixed for the fifth time.

Ms. Houlihan said the Planning Department received withdrawal of the applications for the disc golf proposal on the Stein Road open space parcel from the Recreation Department.

Commissioner Nickerson asked if posting and sharing information about monthly trail walks at the Indian Valley Y.M.C.A would bring more walkers to the town trails. Ms. Houlihan suggested sharing the idea with Valerie Amsel, Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee liaison, at next month's meeting.

b. Northern Connecticut Land Trust Landmark newsletter from March 2023

The Planning Department received a copy of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust Landmark newsletter from March 2023 after the agenda packet was mailed. The newsletter was shared with commission members.

c. Route 140 Intersection improvements notification

The Planning Department received notification from the State of Connecticut regarding the status of intersection improvements at Route 140 and Burbank Road dated April 25, 2023, after the agenda packet was mailed. A copy of the notification was provided to commission members.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (NICKERSON) SECONDED (HARFORD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk