



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024, 7:00 PM

IN PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT
REMOTE ATTENDANCE: ZOOM MEETING
(ATTENDEES BELOW WERE IN PERSON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Regular Members James Gage and Robert Zielfelder (remote) and Alternates Ann Harford and Jon Kaczmarek

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Members Sean Dwyer, George Nickerson, and Laurie Burstein

STAFF: John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner and Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk (remote)

OTHERS

PRESENT: None

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:05 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.

Mr. Colonese said there are conservation strategies that the commission had discussed interest in pursuing, such as historic preservation, open space cluster development, and transfer of development rights.

Mr. Colonese said the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) says one of the first strategies to historic preservation is to secure state funds and conduct a town wide historic resource inventory. He spoke with Mary Dunne at the State Historic Preservation Office. The inventory creates a record of historic buildings, sites, structures, and objects within a defined area and is completed by a historian. A \$20,000 grant is available, and funds are not required from the town. The town can apply for successive grants. He noted that Ellington center was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

Chairman Quarno asked if there is another area the commission could target if there is already information on the historic buildings in the center of town. Mr. Colonese said the entire town could be inventoried, and he's unaware of there being one at this time. Commissioner Zielfelder asked what the inventory would do for the town, such as whether

the inventory would give the town resources to preserve land or structures. Mr. Colonese said the 2008 POCD says the inventory would provide other avenues to potential preservation programs, such as establishing a historic district, tax abatement programs, a demolition delay ordinance, and stewardship programs.

Chairman Quarno said it would not be a bad thing to have a historic preservation inventory, especially since there is state funding, and then decisions could be made to decide how to use the information thereafter. The grant from the state is \$20,000, and the State Historic Preservation Office says it covers about 100 buildings. Commissioner Zielfelder said the town should be efficient with the money.

Mr. Colonese said he would find information on how many potential homes and resources there are that would be included in the inventory and speak with Mary Dunne more about the program.

2. Review Sustainable CT Certification Action Overview Worksheet - Conservation Sections

Mr. Colonese said the Planning Department was notified on May 20 that the town received bronze certification from Sustainable CT. The town got a total of 485 points from 24 actions within 12 categories. Sustainable CT will be sending the town a communications kit, a press release, and a logo for the town's website. The town was also given a chart with a detailed description of which actions got points, how many points, and why points were given. Among the items submitted were the open space inventory, the POCD and Plan of Conservation, details on the town's sustainable snow management program, and silver designation with the SolSmart program. He added that the town is doing an extensive amount of recycling at the Public Works Department and that the high school is composting food waste with Blue Earth Compost.

The bronze certification from Sustainable CT is good for three years and will expire in December 2027. Chairman Quarno said if the historic resource preservation inventory is completed before the certification expires, then the town can submit that information when reapplying for certification.

The commission extended thanks to Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner, for her work on the Sustainable CT initiative.

3. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.

a. Notice of Acquisition of Development Rights, Oakridge Dairy, Farm 2, for 101.98 acres, Recorded May 6, 2024.

Commissioners received the Notice of Acquisition of Development Rights for Oakridge Dairy, Farm 2, which is located between Meadow Brook Road and the high school. The closing is complete. There has been 1,181.45 acres of farmland preserved in Ellington.

b. Farmland Preservation Brochure, Revised May 2024.

Mr. Colonese updated the farmland preservation brochure. Mr. Colonese asked the commission if they wanted to print 100 brochures to distribute at Ellington Farm Day in September and to keep them on the counter in the Planning Department. There is currently \$600 in the printing budget.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (HARFORD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO PRINT 100 FARMLAND PRESERVATION BROCHURES FROM THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S ADVERTISING AND PRINTING ACCOUNT.

- c. Open Space/Farmland/Recreational Assets Inventory, Revised May 2024.

Mr. Colonese updated the Open Space/Farmland/Recreational Assets Inventory spreadsheet including Oakridge Dairy, Farm 2.

4. Report - Open Space Preservation Program

The Board of Selectmen approved the purchase of the Brady property at 79 Kibbe Road for \$300,000. It is a 27-acre parcel. A special town meeting will be held on Monday, June 10 at 6:00 PM at the town hall. The funds for the purchase of the property will come from the open space fund, which has \$203,597 set aside as grant revenue from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the remainder will come from the committed fund balance. The purchase was accepted by DEEP.

Valerie Amsel, the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee liaison, dropped off some edits to the open space brochure to Mr. Colonese, asking to add edits to public access at Metcalf Preserve, Crystal Ridge, and the Highlands. He said he would update the brochure accordingly. Mr. Colonese asked the commission if they wanted to print 100 open space preservation brochures with the edits and he said would update the open space brochure and the assets inventory when 79 Kibbe Road closes.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (HARFORD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO PRINT 100 OPEN SPACE BROCHURES FROM THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S ADVERTISING AND PRINTING ACCOUNT.

Mr. Colonese said he emailed the owner of 178 Crystal Lake Road. The owner had questions about potential funding opportunities for preservation of the parcel. Mr. Colonese responded, but he hasn't heard back yet. The property is now listed for sale for \$89,000 and is noted as sale pending. The state's blue Shenipsit Trail passes through the property.

Mr. Colonese reached out to landowners at the end of Green Road about selling their property for open space preservation. He spoke with George Grant, who owns a 31-acre parcel, who expressed interest. He also spoke with a realtor representing Barbara MacVarish, who owns a 28-acre parcel, interested in selling the land. He has a call into John Dehram who jointly owns two parcels totaling 25 acres. Ms. Houlihan, Town Planner, also spoke with Scott Brady in April about his two parcels on Green Road.

- d. Executive Session to Discuss Possible Open Space Purchases.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (QUARNO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:50 PM FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE ACQUISITIONS INVITING COMMISSION MEMBERS, THE RECORDING CLERK, AND THE ASSISTANT TOWN PLANNER.

MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (KACZMAREK) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8:02 PM. NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS WERE MADE DURING THE EXECUTIVE SESSION.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 23-24 Budget & Expenditure Update.

There is \$390 in the Dues and Subscriptions account. Mr. Colonese said he would follow on the remaining amount. The commission has already paid for membership to the Northern Connecticut Land Trust and the Connecticut Land Conservation Council. The other current expenditure is for the services of the part-time recording secretary.

2. Approval of March 12, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (QUARNO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 12, 2024, AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

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

Commissioner Harford shared updates from the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee. The Boy Scouts will help construct kiosks. The bridge at Kimball has been fixed, and the signs are posted leading into the different walking and hiking areas. Trail Day is coming up on Saturday, June 1.

- b. Northern Connecticut Land Trust Landmark Newsletter, March 2024.

- c. Oakridge Dairy receives CT Dept. of Agriculture Climate Resiliency Grant, Patch article dated April 17, 2024.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (HARFORD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk