



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2024, 7:00 PM

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

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Members James Gage, Robert Zielfelder (Remote), Sean Dwyer (Arrived at 7:09 PM), George Nickerson (Arrived at 7:24 PM), and Alternates Ann Harford and Jon Kaczmarek

ABSENT: Regular Member Laurie Burstein

STAFF: John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner and Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk

OTHERS

PRESENT: None

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:03 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: Historic Preservation

a. Memo to Board of Selectmen – Request for Endorsement of Application for Historic Resources Inventory Grant through the State Historic Preservation Office.

John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner, reviewed the memo to the Board of Selectman (BOS) along with a draft application to pursue the grant money to create a historic resources inventory as decided by the commission at their July 9, 2024, meeting. John reported the BOS endorsed the application so they can proceed forward and apply for the grant, and the BOS motion noted the application can be resubmitted the following grant cycle if funds are no longer available. Chairman Quarno inquired about feedback from the Board of Selectman. John stated feedback was provided from Selectman Jack Turner who suggested the research by Dorothy Cohen in Ellington Chronicles of Change could prove helpful for creating a list, and Sue Phillips, Director of Hall Memorial Library offered the library as a source for more information. Commissioner Harford suggested the Nellie McKnight Museum would likely have helpful information as well. John will assist the architectural historian in gathering research if needed. Chairman Quarno asked if the draft application provided is the

complete application for the grant and John confirmed it is and will send it to the point of contact for any feedback. Updates will be provided at future meetings.

2. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.

a. Ellington Farm Day - Saturday, September 21, 2024, 10am-3pm.

Chairman Quarno shared that during past Ellington Farm Day events, the commission has offered maps and information at different locations and requests if this is possible for the upcoming Farm Day event. John said the Farmland Preservation and Open Space brochures can be offered at Hall Memorial Library. John mentioned including the Open Space brochure at the Trails Committee table at the Ellington Farmer's Market this coming Saturday, September 14th as the Open Space brochure provides information about areas with public access. John added that farmland preservation information was in the Ellington News & Events August Newsletter and on the Ellington News website. Chairman Quarno asked if the Planning Department received inquiries on potential farmland preservation because of the increased posting of program information, John responded that they have not been contacted.

John reported that the tax abatement for eligible farming operations ordinance was approved at town meeting after public hearing on September 9th. The ordinance under statute 12-81m allows municipalities to abate up to 50% of property tax on certain farms like dairy farms, vegetable farms, orchards, and nurseries.

John said that Roaring Brook Farm at 18 Meadow Brook Road has been working with Connecticut DEEP and NRCS on a farm project to construct a building to cover all cattle and animal waste and recently applied for a building permit. The goal of the project is to decrease contamination of Kimballs Brook.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

John stated the approved purchase of the 27-acre Brady property at 79 Kibbe Road successfully transferred on August 15, 2024. The Town Administrator plans to follow up with town departments regarding opening the area to public access.

a. Executive Session to Discuss Possible Open Space Purchases.

Chairman Quarno inquired about making a motion to go into executive session to discuss possible open space purchases. John asked the commission if they would like to discuss potential open space acquisitions for properties on Green Road.

MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (BIDWELL) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:17 PM FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE ACQUISITIONS INVITING COMMISSION MEMBERS, THE ASSISTANT TOWN PLANNER, AND RECORDING CLERK.

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (KACZMAREK) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:30 PM. NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS WERE MADE DURING THE EXECUTIVE SESSION.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 24-25 Budget & Expenditure Update.

John noted the 2024-2025 Budget and Expenditure has reset and added that the Open Space Brochures were recently purchased this budget cycle.

2. Approval of July 9, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 9, 2024, AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

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

Commissioner Harford reported that two bridges have been finished and the bridge on Franklin Ave needs repair. The Trails Committee is working on obtaining easements for the West Road trail and that emergency signs and reflectors are being put on the trails, 13 total signs. Additionally, the committee is working with the Public Works department to install kiosks for trail information.

- b. North Central District Health Dept. Ellington Annual Report July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

- c. CLCC State of the Lands 2023-2024 Land Trust Census Report.

- d. Beech Leaf Disease.

The commission reviewed an August 7th article from New England Public Media about Beech Leaf Disease. Commissioner Nickerson pondered how this disease will affect repopulation of the American variety with the European variety. Commissioner Harford shared the Ellington Farmers Market will have a segment on invasive species on Saturday. Chairman Quarno inquired if this item needs to be kept on the agenda and Vice Chairman Bidwell stated this item does not need to be kept on agenda due to the time of year but could prove useful next springtime.

Chairman Quarno opened the floor for suggestions for future agenda items, none were shared at this time.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (BIDWELL) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk