



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025, 7:00 PM

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

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Regular Members James Gage (via Zoom), Robert Zielfelder, George Nickerson (arrived 7:17pm via Zoom) and Alternate Jon Kaczmarek

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regulars Members Laurie Burstein, Sean Dwyer, and Alternate Ann Harford

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

OTHERS

PRESENT: Valerie Amsel, (via Zoom) Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

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

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Plan of Conservation & Development, Chapter 4-Conservation Strategies, Natural Resource Preservation: Historic Preservation.

John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner, shared the commission received the assistance agreement from the State Historic Preservation Office. Several items were brought to attention, which included Article 6, the special conditions outlined in the agreement, requiring acknowledgement of funding for the project. Furthermore, the agreement outlined the format of submission documents for the work product. Chairman Quarno confirmed the format is what will be expected back as a result of the completed work and John confirmed the understanding. On another note, John will follow up to confirm the number of buildings that will be included in the project. The agreement noted 150 buildings, however, the original understanding was to inventory approximately 100 buildings. Once the agreement is fully signed, the commission will work on the request for proposal template provided by the State Historic Preservation Office. Next, once the proposal is finalized, it will be sent to three qualified consultants. Chairman Quarno asked John if they will be provided a list of potentials consultants to choose from. John confirmed and noted the selection will need to be approved as well. Lastly, the Town would then execute a contract with the chosen consultant, upon approval. Chairman Quarno commented on the assistance agreement, noting recommendations will be made to the town and commission regarding houses that meet the National Register of Historic Places criteria and John confirmed this

understanding. Chairman Quarno then asked about later steps in the process, whether they will need to reach out to homeowners or what actions are then required, and John confirmed the commission can decide next steps at that time.

Commissioner Zielfelder asked what the project will cost. John responded that the grant is \$20,000, which is anticipated to cover 100 homes. John added if there is subsequent funding and continued interest in the project, the commission could pursue more funding in the future. Commissioner Zielfelder then asked where the funding came from. Chairman Quarno replied the commission applied for and received a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office. Additionally, Chairman Quarno noted the inventory project comes at no cost to the town and supports a Plan of Conservation and Development objective. Chairman Quarno reiterated the commission will decide how to proceed once the inventory list is provided.

Valerie Amsel, representative from the Ad Hoc Trails Committee, commented on interest in a project along the same lines as this plan and asked who will pursue this work. John Colonese responded that the commission and town will hire a consultant to put together an inventory of the historic homes in town. Valerie then asked how long it will take for the inventory list to be complete. John stated the timeline will be dictated by the back and forth between the town, State Historic Preservation Office, and consultant. Chairman Quarno noted the waiting period of getting the project set up and running will take time. John will provide updates at future meetings.

2. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.

John Colonese said they did not receive any responses from the press release or publishing information in the town newsletter or on the website regarding the program. Chairman Quarno then asked Commissioner Gage if he has heard of any interest and the Commissioner responded no. John mentioned the farmland parcel priority list the commission worked on from 2022 and if that could be referenced to contact owners directly. Chairman Quarno asked for the list to be added to next month's agenda for further discussion.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

John Colonese shared there is nothing new to report on the open space preservation program. The priority list noted above includes open space and more discussion will continue at next month's meeting. John shared that he still has not heard back from one of the owners of property on Green Road after reaching out by phone and email and will follow up with Town Planner, Lisa Houlihan, as she was last to speak with the owner.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 24-25 Budget & Expenditure Update:

a. Request to approve annual contribution to the Connecticut Land Conservation Council.

MOVED (KACZMAREK) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO CONTRIBUTE \$450.00 TO THE CONNECTICUT LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL FROM THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S DUES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS ACCOUNT.

- b. Request to approve annual contribution to the Connecticut Farmland Trust.

MOVED (KACZMAREK) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO CONTRIBUTE \$195.00 TO THE CONNECTICUT FARMLAND TRUST FROM THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S DUES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS ACCOUNT.

John Colonese noted for the budget line Dues & Subscriptions, there is an additional \$390 available, the fiscal year was not correctly updated. Commissioner Nickerson asked if all donations and memberships are now complete, and John confirmed that only the Connecticut Farm Bureau remains.

2. Correspondence/Discussion:

- a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Monthly Minutes.

Valerie Amsel, Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee representative, shared numerous updates. To start, the committee has three new members, all men which is a change in demographics and one new member will oversee the committee's Facebook page. The committee replaced a bridge at the Hockanum, with plans to replace two more this year. Windermere has been fully blazed. Valerie noted the committee will create a pamphlet or paper about how to blaze and it will be added to trail heads, as well as passed out at the committee's next event. The Highlands picnic area has been completed and blazed, in addition to some brush to potentially be cleared in the future. For the Batz property, game tables and bluebird houses have been added. In addition, a mowing plan has been established with public works for the property. Two gates were installed, one was added at Crystal Ridge and one at Highlands to keep motorized vehicles off private property. The committee had booths at the town Trail of Treats event and at the Historical Society. No hunting and motorized vehicles signs were installed at Windermere. Also, trail maps are now available at the Parks & Rec department. Lastly, a town committee may be formed for students to fulfil service hours with the committee. Valerie noted upcoming events are mentioned in the meeting minutes. Commissioner Zielfelder offered Valerie to reach out to him for help from the Scouts and Valerie accepted and noted the helpfulness of the Scouts in previous efforts.

- b. Connecticut Farm Bureau – Oakridge Dairy receives Workforce Development Award article.
- c. Connecticut Farm Bureau, From the Farm, December 2024 / Volume 39, Issue 4.
- d. Connecticut Land Conservation Council – Updates & Highlights.
- e. CTDOT response regarding the Shenipsit Trail crossing of Route 140, Crystal Lake Road, Geometry Improvements.

John Colonese shared a response from Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) regarding a potential Shenipsit Trail crossing of Route 140, Crystal Lake Road Geometry Improvements. The response was shared with the commission and in summary, the DOT is working with the Connecticut Forest & Park Association regarding the trail. The DOT will not add a crossing due to a low frequency of users. However, the response and map were shared with the commission showing a pathway added at the intersection of Hopkins Road and RT 140, a small triangular piece of land along the state road, and the trail continuing along the backside of the guiderail. John commented

it will likely be up to CT Forest & Parks Association to maintain the trail. John will send this plan and information to the Ad Hoc Trails Committee.

f. Tolland County Farm Bureau, Friends of Agriculture Gathering, February 8, 2025.

3. Approval of November 12, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes.

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

4. Election of Officers.

Chairman Quarno requested the election of officers be moved to the next Conservation Commission meeting due to attendance reasons. By consensus, the commission agreed to table the election of officers to the next meeting.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (ZIELFELDER) SECONDED (KACZMAREK) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk