



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MOTIONS & DECISIONS TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 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 Sean Dwyer, Robert Zielfelder, Laurie Burstein (via Zoom), George Nickerson (via Zoom), and James Gage (via Zoom)

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell and Alternate Ann Harford

STAFF: John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner and Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk (via Zoom)

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:07 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, reported receiving the fully executed agreement from the State Historic Preservation Office, along with a template for a request for proposal. Furthermore, John reported that the finance office sent him a request for proposal template approved by the Town Attorney. Chairman Quarno asked if completing the template is the next step in the process and John confirmed. John will work with the State Historic Preservation Office, Finance Office, and Town Attorney if needed on drafting the appropriate request for proposal. John committed to sharing updates with the commission. Chairman Quarno asked if the State Historic Preservation Office members are the ones to select the consultant for the project and John responded that the town selects the consultant, but the consultant must be on the State approved list.

2. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.

John Colonese referenced the meeting packet sent to the commissioners, which included a list of farmland owners of 20+ acre parcels in the Ellington. The owners on the list were sent letters from the town in February 2023 regarding the farmland preservation program. John noted there have been multiple changes to the list since 2023. This included property at 24 Middle Road that was approved for a 4-megawatt solar facility and 53 Wapping Wood Road that inquired about residential development. A round table discussion ensued regarding locations of the properties. John stated that letters can be re-sent to the listed

properties and added that program information has been posted on the town website, town newsletter, and sent to local newspapers. Chairman Quarno commented that renewed efforts could prove worthwhile. Commissioner Gage agreed and noted owners' situations may have changed.

Chairman Quarno asked if the previous letter used was standard format and language for contacting property owners. John Colonese reviewed the letter sent to property owners in 2023 and summarized that the letter discussed the overall program and provided contact information for further interest. Commissioner Gage commented that adding the announcement of the recent Oakridge Dairy acquisition to the letter could encourage conversations. Chairman Quarno commented adding a quote of testimony from a farmer who has gone through the process could also encourage interest. Commissioner Burstein supported the idea of adding examples and quotes to gain interest. John committed to drafting a revised letter to go to property owners.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

John Colonese referenced the List of Priority Parcels for Open Space Preservation which the commission had previously compiled, last reviewed in 2022. John noted multiple changes since the list was created. These changes included 79 Kibbe Road which is now owned by the Town of Ellington and 4 Tolland Turnpike that was purchased and approved for subdivision for three house lots. Chairman Quarno asked if the 4 Tolland Turnpike property subdivision request came to the Conservation Commission for review. John responded that it did not because in this case the owners are not required to provide open space or a fee-in-lieu of open space as the lots are to transfer to the owner's family members. In addition, John added there have been no new developments on the Green Road properties. John continued the conversation, offering to reach out to owners on the priority list and asked what approach or strategy the commission would like to pursue. Commissioner Dwyer commented on the importance of preserving properties in the Porter Road and Kibbe Road area. A round table discussion ensued regarding the properties on the list.

Chairman Quarno suggested a letter be sent to property owners, potentially in batches by priority. Commissioner Dwyer asked, considering the listed properties, if there are any that from the town side and/or open space or land trust aspect that would benefit the community and residents. Commissioner Gage responded that the rankings already assigned are still accurate and Chairman Quarno added that the criteria that was used for the rankings included characteristics of each property. Commissioner Dwyer confirmed this understanding and discussed purchasing strategy, opting for properties that are practical over quantity. Chairman Quarno agreed that properties that allow more usefulness, i.e. linking trails or increasing currently preserved open space areas are more desirable. A round table discussion ensued. John Colonese committed to sending letters to owners on the priorities list.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 24-25 Budget & Expenditure Update:

John Colonese noted the Connecticut Farmland Trust contribution was made but isn't reflected in the budget at this time. The final contribution from dues and subscriptions is planned for the Connecticut Farm Bureau. John noted the remaining balance for advertising and printing and added that the plan is to budget the same amount for the commission for the next fiscal year.

2. Approval of January 14, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (ZIELFELDER) SECONDED (NICKERSON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 14, 2025, AS WRITTEN.

3. Election of Officers

Chairman Quarno requested the election of officers be moved to the next Conservation Commission meeting in March 2025 due to attendance reasons. By consensus, the commission agreed to move the election of officers to next month's agenda.

4. Correspondence/Discussion:

- a. North Central Conservation District Annual Report.

John Colonese noted that the local dairy farm referenced in the report is Roaring Brook Farm in Ellington. The project will eliminate livestock access, reducing pollutant loading, to a tributary of Broad Brook. The North Central Conservation District is helping the owners acquire funds to design and construct a barn to house the milking herd and waste. Construction has not started, but potentially it will begin this spring.

- b. CT Farmland Trust, contribution letter dated January 29, 2025.

Commissioner Nickerson shared closing remarks to the commission and shared this will be his last term serving on the Ellington Conservation Commission. The commissioner plans to stay involved with the Ad Hoc Trails Committee and support the continued efforts of the commission. Commissioner Nickerson thanked everyone on the commission, and everyone shared kind parting sentiments. The Town of Ellington thanks Commissioner Nickerson in his efforts and commitment to the community and wishes him the best.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (NICKERSON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk