



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, MARCH 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 James Gage, Robert Zielfelder, George Nickerson (arrived at 7:04), and Laurie Burstein (via Zoom)

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Member 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 7:03 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 news from the State Historic Preservation Office that the commission can use Ellington's RFP template in conjunction with specifications from the State's template. John will work with the town Finance Department to complete the forms. The proposal will then be sent to the State Historic Preservation Office for review. Once approved, the commission will move forward with Ellington's process for soliciting bids.

2. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.

A letter was drafted to be sent to farmland owners regarding the preservation program including a positive quote from Seth Bahler of Oakridge Dairy about the program. All commissioners approved the letter as written. Chairman Quarno confirmed there are roughly 20 property owners on the target list.

Commissioner Gage asked about the construction of a barn on Meadow Brook Road and John answered that the owners applied for and received permits for the structure, however, construction has not begun. Commissioner Gage asked for confirmation of property location and John showed Roaring Brook Farm, on the town GIS mapping and noted the area where the structure is proposed. Chairman Quarno asked about the purpose of the

barn and John responded the barn is to hold the milking herd and contain the animal waste. The property abuts the most recently preserved farmland by Oakridge Dairy.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

A letter was drafted to send to approximately 20 target property owners regarding the Open Space Preservation Program. All commissioners approved the letter as written.

John Colonese shared an inquiry from the Ad Hoc Trails Committee President Linda Anderson. The committee is working on acquiring easements along the West Road trail. There is potentially a need for purchasing easements from owners and John asked if the commission would support the purchasing easements using Open Space funds. John also noted the trails are currently being used, but there are no formal agreements with the property owners. Commissioner Gage requested more information on the potential cost of the easements. Chairman Quarno asked how many properties and John answered there are three properties in this area. Chairman Quarno then responded wondering how long the potential easements would be, and John estimated approximately 1,200 feet in total. Commissioner Nickerson discussed another area behind Merrill Industries that would have potential if a trail easement agreement could be acquired to continue an existing trail. John concluded he will speak with Linda about potential easement costs. Commissioner Zielfelder noted the importance of an easement agreement and John responded there is an existing trail easement agreement template they can use.

Valerie Amsel, Ad Hoc Trails Committee representative, shared that Linda has spoken to the three owners, making initial contact. Chairman Quarno asked if there are any recent easement purchases as price suggestions. John noted there have been recent purchases of easements for the sidewalk project along Route 83. Commissioner Zielfelder asked if individuals were responsible for paying legal fees and John responded, since the town has a template agreement it should minimize legal fees. The commission was open to more details on the matter.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 24-25 Budget & Expenditure Update

John reported the commission is on track for spending. A contribution to the Connecticut Farmland Bureau is outstanding but can be made upon receipt of request and approval by the commission.

2. Approval of February 11, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (ZIELFELDER) SECONDED (NICKERSON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 11, 2025, AS WRITTEN.

3. Election of Officers.

a. Chairman Position

MOVED (BURSTEIN) SECONDED (GAGE) TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER QUARNO FOR CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION FOR THE YEAR OF 2025.

**COMMISSIONER QUARNO ACCEPTED THE NOMINATION.
HEARING NO FURTHER NOMINATIONS, THE NOMINATIONS CLOSED.**

MOVED (BURSTEIN) SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ELECT COMMISSIONER QUARNO FOR CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION FOR THE YEAR OF 2025.

b. Vice-Chairman Position

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (BURSTEIN) TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER ZIELFELDER FOR VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION FOR THE YEAR OF 2025.

**COMMISSIONER ZIELFELDER ACCEPTED THE NOMINATION.
HEARING NO FURTHER NOMINATIONS, THE NOMINATIONS CLOSED.**

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (BURSTEIN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ELECT COMMISSIONER ZIELFELDER FOR VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION FOR THE YEAR OF 2025.

4. Correspondence/Discussion:

a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Monthly Minutes.

Valerie Amsel provided updates from the committee which include checking on bird boxes and going out to put up signs in the trail kiosks. The committee is exploring applying for a grant to put a roof over the amphitheater stage on the Batz property. The committee is also planning to work with organizations to repair a bridge near the Hockanum River. Lastly, the committee has regularly scheduled programming and annual clean up in progress.

b. CT Land Conservation Council donation thank you letter dated Feb. 6, 2025.

c. CT Land Conservation Council 2025 Land Conservation Conference Mar. 22, 2025.

d. North Central Conservation District Spring 2025 Plant & Seedling Sale.

e. Notice of Ellington Public Budget Presentations - Community Voice Channel on March 20, 2025, Senior Center and Virtual Zoom Meeting on May 1, 2025, and Hall Memorial Library and Virtual Zoom Meeting on May 3, 2025.

Any individuals interested in serving on the Conservation Commission are encouraged to apply online on the town's webpage or contact the First Selectman's office.

Commissioner Burstein asked if there was any progress on advertising and outreach about the Open Space Preservation Program in the community and if utilizing the Farmer's Market is still a possibility. John will reach out to the Farmer's Market regarding their upcoming schedule. Valerie also commented that the Trails Committee will include any brochures from the Conservation Commission at the Earth Day Celebration.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (ZIELFELDER) SECONDED (NICKERSON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk