



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2025, 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 Robert Zielfelder, Jr., Regular Members James Gage (via Zoom), Kathy Caton, Jamison Boucher and Alternates Ann Harford and Matthew Shea

ABSENT: Regular Member Sean Dwyer, John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner

STAFF: Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk

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.
 - a. Townwide Historic Resources Inventory

Commissioner Harford recommended utilizing the Ellington Library and Historical Society as resources once the project commences. Updates will be provided throughout future meetings.

2. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.

Nothing new to report.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

Nothing new to report.

4. Plan of Conservation - Conservation Focus Areas.

The Plan of Conservation is broken into five focus areas, including the Western Farm Belt, Shenipsit Lake and Forest, Crystal Lake Watershed, Eastern Panhandle, and the Hockanum River Linear Park. Each focus area is geographically based and includes objectives and strategies for conservation. Once reviewed, Chairman Quarno opened the floor to discuss potential target areas. Commissioner Caton first responded and asked about the Western Farm Belt area and if any new farm operations have begun or are coming up soon. Chairman Quarno did not know of any new farm's opening and noted the farmland preservation program's work with existing farms

on purchasing development rights which protects the farmland and provides the farmer with compensation. The commission began discussing the farmland development on Rt 83 and Commissioner Boucher commented that much of the land along Rt 83 is zoned for commercial development, allowing flexibility for land uses.

Commissioner Harford commented on the Hockanum River Linear Park area and noted recreational such as kayakers use of the river is limited due to current conditions. The Trails Committee connected with DEEP about trees and limbs obstructing flow and passage, and DEEP responded in favor of leaving the trees for habitats of aquatic life. However, one tree has begun forming a dam and other potential challenges. In conclusion, Commissioner Harford stated extensive work would be required to meet safe and accessible standards for kayakers.

In continuation, Chairman Quarno asked the commissioners if any focus area stood out for the commission to begin working on. Commissioner Boucher asked if any focus area had overlap with other commissions or initiatives currently being worked on, where resources can be pooled in collaboration. Chairman Quarno pivoted the question to Trails Committee representative Commissioner Harford, who noted projects are ongoing and most of the work is focused on maintenance of existing hiking trails. Vice Chairman Zielfelder Jr. reiterated pursuing and potentially acquiring more land to expand trail use. Furthermore, Commissioner Zielfelder Jr. mentioned focusing on the Western Farm Belt area of town since preserved land is limited there. Chairman Quarno agreed to do a deeper dive into pursuing that area for conservation efforts. A round table discussion ensued about previously pursued properties.

Commissioner Caton circled back to existing farms and emphasized connecting with farm owners about how the commission can best support them. The commission supported the initiative. Chairman Quarno noted previous conversations with the new First Selectman Laurie Burstein about how to bring in other types of agribusinesses into Ellington, such as wineries and breweries. The commission agreed the change in leadership may provide different conservation ideas and avenues to pursue. It was noted that the Zoning Regulations were recently revised to allow for these types of agricultural uses.

Commissioner Boucher inquired if the commission has not pursued initiatives in the past due to limited resources, and are other towns doing things Ellington isn't due to a lack of resources. Chairman Quarno responded in favor of exploring that aspect and conversed with Commissioner Gage about the bonded farmland preservation fund, which is believed to be unavailable now. However, Commissioner Gage noted there is an open space fund that may have the ability to be used in acquiring farmland. A round table discussion ensued. In conclusion, the Commission agreed to continue review of the Plan of Conservation when formulating ideas on initiatives and to concentrate on open space preservation with a focus on the Western Farm Belt area.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 25-26 Budget & Expenditure Update:

a. Memberships and Contributions.

By consensus, the Commission tabled this for future reevaluation.

2. Approval of November 18, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (CATON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 18, 2025, AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Update.

Commissioner Harford shared that the Trails Committee removed two downed trees and reopened a trail along the Hockanum River. Additionally, a wooden trail bridge near Sullivan Tire has become slippery so efforts to secure that will hopefully happen soon. Vice Chairman Zielfelder Jr. suggested making grooves into the wood for grip.

b. CT Farmland Trust – Fall 25 Newsletter.

c. CT Farm Bureau – From the Farm November 2025.

d. CT Land Conservation Council – 2025 Impact Report.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (BOUCHER) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER JR.) TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk