



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786
TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2026, 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, Sean Dwyer, Kathy Caton, Kalagena Sullivan, and Alternate Matthew Shea

ABSENT: Regular Member Jamison Boucher and Alternate Ann Harford

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

OTHERS

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

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:01 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 – Historic Resources Inventory Update.

John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner, updated the commission that the inventory is almost complete and the consultant will have a draft soon for review. The draft will be in two parts, a write-up on the history of the town, plus forms for each of the 100 historic buildings in the study. Chairman Quarno asked where the information is sent and John responded the inventory goes to the State Historic Preservation Office. Vice Chairman Zielfelder Jr. asked if the information will be on town property cards, where John answered no, but will be on the State Historic Preservation Office website. Commissioner Dwyer asked if a copy will be provided at the library; John confirmed and added a digital copy will be available as well.

2. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.

Interest letters and brochures for the Farmland Preservation Program were sent to owners on the priority list on March 24th, 2026, and an additional 100 farmland brochures were ordered from the advertising and printing budget.

Commissioner Gage asked for an update on the proposed solar farm project, Salt Box solar. John responded there are no updates yet on the Salt Box solar project and once an application's available, it will be shared with the commission. It was noted State and Town Officials recently visited some of the existing and proposed solar sites in East Windsor and Ellington. A round table discussion ensued.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

Interest letters will be sent soon to the priority list owners. The commission reviewed the interest letter and approved the wording.

John Colonese shared new information from Matt Starr, Property Agent at CT DEEP on the 20-acre parcel on Somers Road that abuts the state forest. Matt estimated it would take roughly 2 years to acquire. However, if the Town does the appraisal, this will shorten the timeline by potentially one year. John noted the owner expressed desire to move forward sooner, thus posing if the commission would be willing to support completing the appraisal with funding coming from the Town's Open Space account. Matt confirmed an appraisal would be \$3,000-\$5,000 using the yellow book standard and would be valid for about one year's time. The commission discussed concerns regarding funding an appraisal, such as the owner no longer intending to sell to the State prior to a purchase agreement, the owner agreeing to a purchase price based on the appraisal, setting a precedent, and if there are challenges of the property being owned by an estate. The commission generally agreed that it was a good opportunity to support the future acquisition of the property by having the Town pay for the appraisal. The process requires a recommendation from the commission to the Board of Selectman to approve allocating money for the appraisal.

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (GAGE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO RECOMMEND THE BOARD OF SELECTMAN ALLOCATE UP TO \$5,000.00 FROM THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON OPEN SPACE FUND FOR THE APPRAISAL OF A 20-ACRE PARCEL EAST OF SOMERS ROAD KNOWN AS ASSESSOR PARCEL NO. 191-001-0000 TO SUPPORT THE ACQUISITION OF THE PROPERTY BY THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION RECREATION AND NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST PROGRAM.

The commission also discussed a 10-acre town-owned, landlocked parcel abutting the above property and the potential to sell or donate the parcel to the State. John Colonese noted in his next conversation with the State that he will mention the parcel to gauge interest.

4. Priority Rankings for Open Space & Farmland Preservation.

The priority list for Open Space is fully ranked. Commissioners were encouraged to utilize the Town GIS mapping to scout new open space and farmland areas for possible

preservation. After interest letters have been received by owners, if no interest develops, Chairman Quarno suggested to rethink preservation outreach efforts.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 25-26 Budget & Expenditure Update:

a. Dues & Subscriptions:

- Connecticut Land Conservation Council
- Connecticut Farm Bureau
- Connecticut Farmland Trust

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (SULLIVAN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY CONTRIBUTE \$450 TO THE CONNECTICUT LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL, \$195 TO THE CONNECTICUT FARM BUREAU, AND \$195 TO THE CONNECTICUT FARMLAND TRUST FROM THE DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS ACCOUNT.

2. Approval of March 10, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (SULLIVAN) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER JR.) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 10, 2026, AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Update.

Valerie Amsel, Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee Representative, reported no trespassing signs were installed by owners following an ATV accident on the Windermere trail, which has stopped access to a portion of the trail. Possible solutions were discussed, including the acquisition of abutting land, 16 Penfield Ave, as open space or establishment of an easement to the town to preserve the integrity of the trail system. The property has surfaced in previous meetings for acquisition potential. John Colonese reported contact with Trails Committee President Linda Anderson about possible solutions. A round table discussion ensued. In conclusion, John will connect with Linda Anderson and the real estate agent of the property. More information on the discussion of the property can be found in the minutes of the Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee April 1, 2026, meeting.

Going forward, the Trails Committee will begin repair work on the Kimball trail, along with an Eagle Scout Project for the Crystal Ridge trails and a big work party in the beginning of May at Crystal Ridge trails as well. The committee will be attending the Earth Day celebration on April 25th with brochures from the Conservation Commission available. Lastly, Connecticut Trails Day on June 6th and 7th happenings with the Vernon Greenways along the Hockanum River.

b. CT Farmland Trust – Letter March 9, 2026.

c. CT Farm Bureau – From the Farm March 2026.

d. Northern CT Land Trust – Landmark newsletter March 2026.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

**MOVED (CATON) SECONDED (SULLIVAN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO
ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:13 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk