



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026, 7:00 PM

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

PRESENT: Vice Chairman Robert Zielfelder, Jr., Regular Members James Gage, Jamison Boucher (arrived at 7:03), Kalagena Sullivan, Alternates Ann Harford and Matthew Shea

ABSENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno and Regular Members Sean Dwyer and Kathy Caton

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

OTHERS

PRESENT: Laurie Burstein, First Selectman and Mary Cardin, Board of Selectmen Liaison

I. CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chairman Robert Zielfelder, Jr. called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items):

Laurie Burstein, First Selectman, shared a thank you to the commissioners for their hard work.

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, spoke with the E2 Project Management consultant today and noted that a draft of the inventory is expected to be provided by the June meeting. Furthermore, the State Historic Preservation Office has reimbursed the Town for two invoices thus far.

2. Report - Farmland Preservation Program.

There have been no responses from the recently mailed interest letters. Information on the farmland preservation program was added to the Ellington News & Events

newsletter. Laurie Burstein, First Selectman, commented that legislation is in final stages of providing additional funding for farmland preservation.

3. Report - Open Space Preservation Program.

- a. Board of Selectmen allocation of Open Space Funds for an appraisal to support CT DEEP acquisition of a 20-acre parcel east of Somers Road, APN 191-001-0000.

On May 11, 2026, the Board of Selectmen allocated funds for an appraisal to support CT DEEP acquisition of a 20-acre parcel east of Somers Road, APN 191-001-000. John Colonese is now working to get quotes from appraisers. Three companies responded with interest and the hope is to share proposals for next month. Arnold Grant of Hartford, CT, Elm Realty Advisors of Rocky Hill, CT, and Galvin Appraisal Services of Farmington, CT were interested in providing quotes. Commissioners favored moving forward with the lowest bidder, depending on standards across appraisals. The property owner is happy with the progress.

- b. 16 Penfield Avenue – Response to Interest Letter.

The COO of Family Stations Inc., Dave Blombsterberg, contacted the Planning Department regarding the interest letter. He shared that the company did not renew the radio station license or their contract with the real estate agent. They are interested in working with the town on acquisition if the town is interested. If acquisition were to move forward, they noted their willingness to work to remove the towers and building as part of the purchase. He was also connected with the Town of Vernon as their property is also located in Vernon. A round table discussion ensued regarding property characteristics and surrounding properties.

BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION DECIDED TO GO OUT OF AGENDA ORDER AND MOVE ACTIVE BUSINESS, ITEM 3.C TO THE END OF THE MEETING.

The commissioners were provided with wording for next month's Ellington News & Events newsletter on the Open Space Preservation Program for review. Vice-Chairman Zielfelder Jr. asked if this is the most recent data for the Cost of Community Services study from 2018. It was confirmed that this was the last time a Cost of Community Services study was completed. The commissioners generally agreed with the wording.

4. Priority Rankings for Open Space & Farmland Preservation.

Nothing new to report. The commission agreed to remove this item for next month's agenda.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 25-26 Budget & Expenditure Update:

John Colonese noted advertising and printing funds are available to purchase more open space brochures for the fiscal year.

MOVED (SHEA), SECONDED (BOUCHER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED TO PURCHASE 100 OPEN SPACE BROCHURES AT \$173 FROM THE ADVERTISING AND PRINTING FUND.

2. Approval of April 14, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (SULLIVAN) SECONDED (BOUCHER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 14, 2026, AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

- a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Update.

Ann Harford, Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee representative, reported “No Trespassing” signs were posted on a portion of the Windermere trail. A letter of permission of use is being considered for property owners along portions of the West Road trail as opposed to easement agreements. Current projects include board replacement on Windermere trail, installing two new walkways to cross wetlands and to access river perspectives, and lastly, board replacement at the Franklin trail. Scout repair work on the Crystal Ridge trails was productive.

- b. Connecticut Land Conservation Council, thank you letter dated May 4, 2026.
- c. CT Farmland Trust – Spring 2026.
- d. Community Voice Channel – Commission Participation in Discussion on Open Space.

The First Selectman is looking for participants for the July 21st or August 18th Community Voice Channel events to discuss the open space and farmland preservation programs. Commissioners decided to keep the item for the June meeting to check commissioner availability.

4. 2026 Ellington Wall of Honor Inductee – Jim Gage.

Jim Gage, one of the original members of the Ellington Conservation Commission, shared his long-standing goal of maintaining the rural character of the town. Jim noted that the Conservation Commission plays a big role in these efforts, alongside town departments. Congratulations to Jim!

BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION DECIDED TO GO TO ACTIVE BUSINESS, ITEM 3.C.

- c. Executive Session to Discuss Possible Open Space Purchases.

MOVED (HARFORD), SECONDED (BOUCHER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:33 PM FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE ACQUISITIONS INVITING COMMISSION MEMBERS, THE ASSISTANT TOWN PLANNER, AND RECORDING CLERK.

MOVED (HARFORD), SECONDED (BOUCHER) AND PASSED UNANIOUSMLY TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:55 PM.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (BOUCHER) SECONDED (SULLIVAN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk