



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2020, 7:00 PM
ZOOM MEETING
(IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE NOT PERMITTED DUE TO COVID19)
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROVIDED VIA ZOOM)**

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Vice Chairman David Bidwell, Regular Members Sean Dwyer, Robert Zielfelder, Laurie Burstein, James Gage and George Nickerson and Alternate Ann Harford

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner and Christine Post, Recording Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items): **NONE**

II. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Sustainable Ellington Initiative
 - a. 2.5 Create a Natural Resource and Wildlife Inventory - Draft 4-29-20, Distributed 5-5-2020, Pages 1-9

Ms. Houlihan reported that the Natural Resource and Wildlife Inventory was not yet in final form, but suggested the Commission review and comment on each section as they are now for editorial purposes. To that end, Ms. Houlihan introduced each section and gave the commission members time to read and comment. The following are the agreed upon changes:

In Section 1 of the inventory, both the Introduction and Natural Resource Inventory were agreed to unanimously. Ms. Houlihan asked the Commission if they wanted the subsection Bedrock Geology expounded upon and it was decided to ask John Colonese, Assistant Planner Wetland Zoning Officer to do some more research to see if there is any other information that can be added to this paragraph. In Section B, Soils, subsection "Marshes land" will be changed to "Marsh land". Further it was agreed that the entire inventory will be reformatted once complete.

Vice Chairman Bidwell queried if there was a photo of a Fen that showed an actual plant like shown in the other 3 soil types and Ms. Houlihan said she would look for a different picture. Commissioner Burstein suggested Fens be deleted in their entirety since there are none in Ellington, however, the Commission decided to leave the section in because it is one of the five (5) major soil types.

Ms. Houlihan suggested making "DEEP" a defined term for the entirety of the inventory to indicate the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection and further using the acronym "NRCS" as a defined term to indicate the Natural Resources Conservation

Service throughout the document as well, which the Commission agreed to. Likewise, it was agreed that “POCD” will be a defined term for Plan of Conservation and Development throughout the inventory and also use the acronym “CWC” as the defined term for Connecticut Water Company.

In the second paragraph under subsection Prime and Statewide Important Farmland Soils, Ms. Houlihan suggested that the second to last sentence of said paragraph be changed to: “There are currently 888 acres of preserved farmland in Ellington.”

Under Section C, Water Resources, Ms. Houlihan will clarify the correct spelling of one of the listed brooks, either Abbey or Abby.

It was agreed by the Commission that the following maps will be inserted into the inventory: Bedrock Geology, Surficial Materials, Inland Wetland Soils, Farmland Soils, Potential for Subsurface Sewage Disposal, Subregional Basins and Surface Water Flow Directions and Q3 Flood Zone Data Ellington, CT and Forest Resources.

Commissioner Nickerson raised a concern about leaching fields and Ms. Houlihan stated that the majority of the houses around Crystal Lake are connected to public sewer or have the ability to connect to public sewers.

Commissioner Zeilfelder suggested adding the information that the Crystal Lake, drains into Middle River and then turns into the Willimantic River, in the first paragraph on page 8, under the section, Subregional Watersheds.

Ms. Houlihan will cite Ellington’s regulations regarding development of a flood plain area.

Commissioner Burstein pointed out that there is missing information in the last paragraph of the Forested Land section, which Ms. Houlihan agreed staff is still researching this matter to complete this section. Further the last sentence of the first paragraph will be changed to: “They filter the air, safeguard private and public drinking water sources, produce locally grown forest products, provide essential habitat for wildlife, moderate summer and winter temperatures and provide recreational opportunities.” The second paragraph of the same section will be changed to: “The Ellington POCD recommends a selective tree harvest program based on a plan prepared by a licensed forester to benefit the long-term health of the forest.”

b. 2.7 Provide Education on Water Conservation

There are no upcoming events planned as of yet, however, Ms. Houlihan suggested that the Commission’s water conservation information can be added to the next town newsletter. Chairman Quarno suggested due to the uptick in gardening that information could be included regarding garden and lawn irrigation and water conservation.

2. Update – Ellington Hockanum River Committee: Harford/Nickerson – Leads

a. Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee – Monthly agenda/minutes

Commissioner Harford reported Japanese Knotwood is being kept under control, and stair repair was performed on trails on Lower Butcher Road and West Road. The walkway off of Windermere needs to be fixed but doesn’t present a danger to the public. The trails committee is still waiting for word on equipment training and the trails are being well used without much trash being left behind. Commissioner Harford

suggested a pop-up tent as an expenditure that could be utilized frequently and stored easily. This purchase would need to be voted on prior to spending the money.

Ms. Houlihan explained the evolution of the Trails Committee and the role of the Hockanum River Committee. She suggested the Ellington Trails Committee be changed into a permanent committee and the Hockanum River Committee become part of it. The Commission agreed and she offered to facilitate a conversation with the First Selectman's office.

3. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program: Gage/Staff – Leads
 - a. Status - Oakridge Dairy Application, Jobs Hill and Meadow Brook Roads.

Ms. Houlihan reported that she was asked by finance to wait on moving this forward until the budget was finalized and is hopeful to get in front of the Boards in July. She will be working with Paula Stahl to coordinate a presentation looking at the bigger picture of the Cost of Community Services to preserve farmland.

4. Report - Open Space Preservation Program: Gage – Lead

Nothing new to report. Commissioner Gage will update Ms. Houlihan once he hears back from the finance office.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY 19-20 Budget Expenditure Update

Ms. Houlihan explained the Commission normally donates unexpended funds at the end of each fiscal year to the Hockanum River Committee, land trust and trails group. However, due to potential fiscal constraints associated with COVID19 she suggested the Commission forego donations this year. The Commissioners agreed.

2. Approval of the May 5, 2020 regular meeting minutes

MOVED (BIDWELL) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 5, 2020 AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence: None

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (HARFORD) SECONDED (DWYER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Post, Recording Clerk