MINUTES
SUSTAINABILITY TEAM MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2025
7:00PM
MEETING ROOM 3

1. Call to Order 7:09PM
    a. In person: Amalia Shaltiel, Amber McDonnell, Alan Ponanski, Tom Sevigny, Jay Fortner, Linda Zemienieski. Via Zoom: Jesse Scott, David Oakes.
2. Approval of Agenda
    a. Mr. Ponanski motioned, Dr. Fortner second. Ms. Shaltiel moves to add Team Members report as it was omitted, to be added to Old Business after Activities report. All in favor, the motion carries.
3. Approval of November meeting minutes
    a. Mr. Ponanski motioned, Dr. Fortner second. No discussion, all in favor.
4. Membership and Admin
    a. Welcome Mr. Sevigny to the Sustainability Team. He wishes to be a regular member. Ms. Zemienieski clarifies that she did not ask Ms. Bourgoin to stay on as co-chair. She said that a selected member of BOS must be a member; the committee has options. It is hard to have this conversation without Ms. Bourgoin present, but she does have a town email so which enables us to check that inbox. It is up to Ms. Bourgoin whether she wants to continue as co-chair or a regular member. Mr. Ponanski moved to make Ms. Shaltiel chairperson if Ms. Bourgoin does not want to be a co-chair, Ms. McDonnell second. Ms. Shaltiel moves to wait until we have Ms. Bourgoin present. Mr. Scott abstains. Will change membership in next meeting.

Note: we did not have correspondence or public comment due to lack of availability of the Sustainability team email as Ms. Bourgoin was absent from this meeting.

5. Old Business
    a. Report on activities since last meeting.
        i. Toy swap (Tanya Bourgoin and Amber McDonnell) – effort postponed until next year.
        ii. Harvest House 11/23 (Nora Myers) – Ms. Myers absent. Dr. Fortner states this was a great community effort, looks forward to doing it again next year. 20 adults attended the meal, 10+ children served and dined also. Liz from St. Stephens was very helpful in the flow of the meal, we are grateful for her support.
        iii. Annual Report to BOS in December (Amalia Shaltiel) – BOS presentation is tomorrow (12/17) 7PM, sent PowerPoint slides to all of us in advance. Team support is welcome and encouraged at the presentation.
6. New Business
    a. Planning Next year's events (Alan Ponanski)
        i. Mr. Ponanski provided a rough draft of a calendar of monthly themes on what we are trying to do as a sustainability team based on the selectman's citation (see attached). His intention is not to spearhead all these items as the list is ambitious, but is willing to help coordinate through the chair and the town. For January: Plant Native Seeds workshop with Susan Kinsman at First Church (date/time TBD), we will promote it via FB and East Haddam News. Susan will write the article for the East Haddam News. Dr. Fortner and Mr. Ponanski will work together on this workshop. Mr. Ponanski will coordinate another event at either First Church or the grange to present the Douglas Tallamy Checklist with the Lower CT Valley Land Trust.
    b. Project possibilities with Climate Leader Award (Amalia Shaltiel)

i. Per SustainableCT, we are allowed to use these funds for a tree planting program, cool roof installation, complete streets infrastructure, purchase an EV for town use, EV charger purchase/install for the town, energy benchmarking or an energy plan, energy efficiency education. We must document our intention along with a budget and complete it within a year. Ms. Shaltiel asked Mr. Sevigny to talk with Don Angersola to get up to speed on where we are with energy audits on town buildings. Freedom of Information Meeting 12/22 7PM MOC meeting room 1 and 2. Mr. Sevigny mentioned Thermal Energy Networks, geothermal HVAC for an entire main street. Iowa was one of the first to do this. They drilled the wells, laid the pipes, and hooked up business and municipal buildings to it along the main street. CT set up the structure for it and according to PACE, funding is forthcoming (pending a feasibility study). Use wells or waste water from the wastewater treatment plants. Saves huge amounts of money for HVAC and reduces carbon footprint. PACE is promoting this, sounds promising if the state moves forward, suggests we look at it and suggested having PACE present to us and Economic Development on it. Ms. Shaltiel suggests we as a team start looking at what PACE is offering for an energy plan. https://www.pacecleanenergy.org/clean-energy-plan/

Leading initiatives

ii. Energy report from Mr. Scott: outreach efforts are on hold until the spring, waiting on backlog with the contractors, will start to re-engage in the spring. Ms. Shaltiel adds that we received an Eversource-approved social media blurb today, we will post on our FB. Mr. Scott ordered the wooden wall shelf for Sustainability Team flyers to be displayed at MOC. Don Angersola gave us permission to have it installed near the restrooms. Lantern Energy is booking into March, we will decide in January when want to pursue HeatSmart outreach again.

iii. Mr. Sevigny: Broadband committee – we were denied for the grant, money went to Comcast/Frontier. Next we went to federal government, fruitful discussion in the beginning but when Trump administration came in, those conversations ended and we haven't heard from them since. In a holding pattern for awhile but Mr. Sevigny happened to be at a conference earlier this month and bumped into Civitas out of NJ, they have been working in CT. Instead of fiber optic, they do wireless internet using small boxes around town which send out a signal, 1 gigabyte of speed up and down (very fast). They are coming here to present to the broadband committee on 1/23/26 about the technology so we can learn more. This is a private/public partnership, governing board will be townspeople who will oversee the municipal broadband system. New tree warden: Sean Daigle, CT-licensed arborist, has already started. Hired as a Deputy Tree Warden for now. Ms. Shaltiel asked if he would be working with the Conservation Commission, Mr. Sevigny hopes so. Don Angersola is now head of public works.

iv. Mr. Ponanski: Conservation Commission is doing well at getting things done (Bernie and Cameron), maintaining trails and trying to increase citizen use of the trails. Erected new signs to alert the public that hunting is allowed on town land. Publishing articles about local nature and animals, etc. He looks forward to any type of outreach with the new tree warden, anything they can do to increase public participation in open space is encouraged. Ms. Shaltiel walks the trails, invites anyone who wants to become a walker, walk once a month and report fallen trees to the chair of the Conservation Commission Joe Sanna. Mr. Ponanski mentions we are at full scale war with invasives. Not sure if eradication is going to happen soon, more about management. The big problem we face is the understory which is being affected by the invasives.

v. Ms. Shaltiel: we received brochures on our achievement for gold. Biggest piece of that pie is open space and trails.

c. RiverCOG-Regional Waste Existing Conditions Presentation, Website, and Survey (Amalia Shaltiel)
    i. Mr. Ponanski attended a presentation in November on this. This is an ongoing study to see how towns can work together to manage waste. Ms. Shaltiel will send the survey to Ms. Zemienieski to post and encourage participation, asks everyone to share it far and wide. The specific action item for January re: RiverCOG RWA is to see if we can cut holiday wrapping paper from the waste stream. Ms. Shaltiel will talk with Janice at RiverCOG to see if they are ready for that. Mr. Ponanski suggests we have a consultant attend our next meeting to discuss further.

8. Volunteers and Liaison reports
9. Audience of Citizens
10. Announcements
11. Next meeting Tues 1/20/26 6:30PM (NOTE: going forward we will meet on the first Thursday of the month at 6:30PM instead of 7PM. January is different as the first Thursday falls on New Years Day.)
12. Adjournment: 8:37PM

Public participants may come to the meeting or view the meeting on YouTube Live at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLZq-CmatoKY6FW829c6mBA?view_as=subscriber

You may also access the YouTube Live link from the Town's website: www.easthaddam.org

Questions/comments may be sent to sustainability.team@easthaddam.org prior to and during the meeting.

Questions/comments will be read aloud during the "Audience of Citizens" section of the meeting.

Questions/comments and responses will be included in the minutes and posted on the town website.

Every effort will be made to provide responses during the meeting.