Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Date: Tuesday, January 6, 2026
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: Municipal Office Building, Room #1

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Joe Sina.

2. Roll Call and Alternate Appointments

Members Present: Joe Sina, Bernie Gillis, Barry Bernard, Alan Ponanski, Cameron Beard, Pat Capel, John Olin.
Members Absent: Susan Pagnano, David Walls.
Guests: Ralph Chappell

Alternate Appointments: None needed.

3. Approval of Agenda
Motion to approve the agenda.
Gillis/Bernard – Passed Unanimously.

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes from November 4, 2025
Motion to approve the minutes as presented.
Gillis/Capel – Passed with one abstention.

5. Presentation from Public
None

6. Chair's Updates

- Conservation Commission and Land Trust were contacted about possibly helping with a project to be initiated by a second grade teacher in E. Haddam (Lindsay Pattavina) who would like to develop "literacy trails" to encourage kids to get outside and develop reading skills. The Commission would be interested in helping and will await more definite plans.

- In response to a question about the Open Space around the golf course, Jim Ventres had sent an email saying that if the town bought the golf course, it would likely be maintained as open space. However, a definite buyer has not been established at this point. Jim will be invited to give a Q&A at the next meeting
- Mr. Sina reported on a meeting between Mr. Gillis, Mr. Beard and himself with two individuals from UConn involved with the CT Trail Finder website. They were interested in adding the town trails to the website. We sent them some materials and are awaiting a draft of what the site might look like.
- An issue was noted with the lack of plowing at many of the preserve parking lots, with some being difficult to access. Mr. Sina will discuss with the town.

7. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Updates

i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis

Mr. Gillis reported trail maintenance work including removing a substantial number of downed trees. He will be looking to finish the cleanup of old playground mats from Nichols and did more work on removal of the shed at Winterbrook. Work parties will be needed to complete the work at both sites. He is also planning on working with Red the ox to haul materials for 2 bog bridges when the weather permits.

ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Sina

Articles on trail applications and on the use of Red the ox for preserve work were published in the E. Haddam News in December. An article on Birds of Prey has been submitted for a January issue. [Note added after the meeting: An article on resources available for planning hikes, biking, etc. has been submitted for the next Events magazine.]

- **iii. Climate Resilience – Mr. Olin**
  Mr. Olin reported that the town will be applying for a DEEP grant for the design phase of removal of the Goodspeed rehearsal hall and making a deeper channel in that area to begin to address the flooding issues along the Succor Brook.
- Mr. Olin passed around pictures of the children doing field work as part of the Lifeforms project funded by an Eightmile River grant. Further information will be shared with the parents, and then with the general public at a later date. The results to date seem very positive.
- Mr. Olin raised the possibility of applying for a portion of an EPA grant providing for studies in the Long Island Sound watershed. Various ideas were

put forward centering around resilience needs in E. Haddam. At this point a statement of interest for specific problems is needed. Members will forward ideas to John.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls

There was no report from IWWC. Mr. Capel was asked to temporarily fill in for Mr. Walls at future meeting.

ii. P&Z Updates – Mr. Gillis

Mr. Gillis reported that the Moodus Food Stop proposal is going before a town meeting soon.

iii. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina

A Town meeting is being scheduled to vote on purchasing the Urban Farm Nature Preserve and approving a land swap with Mr. Sprecher. The timing is expected to be January/February 2026.

iv. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard

Nothing to report

v. Sustainability Committee –Mr. Ponanski

The Sustainability Committee has set goals for 2026. They will highlight different areas where residents can contribute to sustainability on a monthly basis. A calendar of planned events is attached to these minutes

c. Planting/Existing Garden Updates – Mr. Sina

No new work given the season.

d. Reserve Monitor Discussion – Mr. Sina

No news to report

8. New Business

a. New Bills

The following bill(s) were submitted and approved:
$130.62 to John for supplies for the Lifeforms project.

Motion to approve the bill(s)
Gillis/Ponanski – Passed Unanimously.

b. Discussion from Commission Members
None

9. Public Comment
None

10. Next Meeting
The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 7:00 PM in Room #1.

11. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn at 8:20 PM.
Bernard/Gillis – Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joseph Sina
Chair

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2026	Theme	Actions	Speakers and Collaborations
January	Vibrant Ecosystems Homegrown National Parks Regional Waste Management	Plan Native Seeds Workshop Present Douglas Tallamy Checklist Reuse & Repurpose Xmas Items	Susan Kinsman Lower CT Valley Land Trust River COG RWA Consultants
February	Community Safety Protecting Our Environment Establishing Teen Center	Home Safety & Wellness Complete Tree Protections Consult HR High School	East Haddam Fire & Rescue Alan Ponanski Family & Youth Service
March	Strategic Materials Management Establishing New Library	Repair Cafe Composting Workshop Conference With Stakeholders	Expert Fixers CT Agricultural Station Library Board of Trustees
April	Inclusive Engagement Communication and Education Homelessness	Town Cleanup Earth Day Celebration Establish apartments/shelters	Jim Ventres Super Hero Community Cleanup Habitat For Humanity Project
May	Well Stewarded Land Preserving The Understory Historical Assets	No Mow May – Pollinators Native plants & Invasive Removal East Haddam History Celebration	Garden Club & Conservation Comm CT Forest & Parks Preservation Connecticut
June	Dynamic and Resilient Planning Inclusive and Equitable	(Connecticut Trail Day) Community Garden, How to Start a Block Party	CT Forest & Parks First Church Pete Govert and Desiree
July	Thriving Local Economies	Heritage Market	Economic Development Commission
August	Healthy and Diverse Housing Local Agriculture Promotion	Power Wash and House Repair Establish E.H. Farms Celebration	Family and Youth Service CT Agriculture Department
September	Transportation Systems	Town Bike Paths	Economic Development Comm Schools
October	Effective Compassionate Homelessness Prevention	Repair Café Establish Town Hotline	Experts Fixers
November	Ecotourism Optimal Health and Wellness	Goodwin Trail East Haddam Health Day	East Haddam Land Trust East Haddam Senior Center

December	Renewable and Efficient Energy Infrastructure and Operations	Operation Fuel, EV and energy infrastructure	VFW, East Hampton, Family and Youth Services

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