Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 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, Barry Bernard, Pat Capel, Bernie Gillis, Alan Ponanski (on Zoom), David Walls
Members Absent: Cameron Beard, John Olin, Susan Pagnano
Guests: Ralph Chappell
Alternate Appointments: Barry Bernard, Pat Capel, and David Walls were seated as alternates for the meeting.

3. Approval of Agenda
Motion to approve the agenda as presented.
Walls/Bernard: Passed Unanimously.

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes from February 3, 2026.
Joe Sina corrected one sentence on page 2 - under Chair's Updates item 2, the second sentence should read "He needs to include some of the year's accomplishments *with* the budget requests."
Motion to approve the minutes as corrected.
Capel/Bernard: Passed Unanimously.

5. Presentations from the Public
None

6. Chair's Updates
- The Friends of Machimoodus State Park will host their annual Spring Fling, on Sunday, March 22, 2026, from 12PM to 3PM. The Conservation Commission will have a table at the event.

- Mr. Sina mentioned that, at the last meeting, the Commission discussed joining the municipal affiliate program of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) at a cost of $250 or making a donation instead.
  Motion by Bernie Gillis, seconded by Barry Bernard, to make a donation of $250. **Passed Unanimously.**
- CT Trail Finder (www.cttrailfinder.com) is a site that the Commission could use to post maps and details about the many trails in East Haddam. A draft is available online and Mr. Sina will circulate the information.
- Mr. Sina reported that DEEP has grants for forestry management plans. This could be used on the Shugrue Farm Reserve to help restore it to a healthy forest and address the problem of invasives on the property. The grants are reimbursement grants and do not require a 50/50 match.
  Motion by Bernie Gillis, seconded by Alan Ponanski, to send in the DEEP Forestry Management Plan Grant RFI (Request For Information) for part of the Shugrue Farm Reserve, acreage to be determined. **Passed Unanimously.**
- Mr. Sina presented the Commission's budget request at the Board of Selectmen's budget meeting. Mr. Gelston was positive and congratulated the Commission on keeping the trails clean and using the ox to transport the lumber for the bridge. We don't have the 25/26 YTD yet, but expenses are low because we were without Ruth Ziobron, our recording secretary, for a while, but that will increase now. We have $1000 for community events, and were able to cut $1000 from printing, periodicals, and conference. Mr. Gillis doesn't expect to need much for trail maintenance. We need to stay within our total budget, but the Finance Dept. can adjust line items according to what we need.
- Mr. Sina mentioned the possibility of using some of the fields at the Hatch Reserve for haying. Pat Capel checked the Hatch Reserve requirements which specify no commercial activities, no chemical pesticides, and only native plants are allowed. It is a lot of work to mow it every 6 months to keep it clear and open. The autumn olive is invasive and will come back after being cut down. There was a discussion about how to destroy the roots of invasive plants and trees.
- There was a discussion about events and cosponsoring some events with the Land Trust and/or the Sustainability Team. First Church and the Land Trust are working together on an Opossum Rehabilitation Event on April 25 as part of the town's Earth Day Week (April 17-26). The Our Backyard National Park Series has advice on how landowners can help by focusing on their own backyards. Mr. Sina suggested asking Tanya Bourgoin and Amalia Shaltiel, Co-chairs of the Sustainability Team, to attend the Commission's April 7 meeting.
- Ralph Chappell suggested creating a hike for CT Trails Day in June. Mr.

Ponanski will look into it.

- There was a discussion about needing more people to help with work parties and other projects. The BOS can appoint more people to the Commission if needed. The AG Commission put an article in the East Haddam News asking for new members and got 5 more people. Hunters use our trails in hunting season. Members of the Moodus Sportsmens Club could help out with a project on a Saturday morning, without making a commitment to attend meetings.
- Mr. Gillis said we could use help cleaning up Winterbrooke, and the Salmon River outlook has a lot of Japanese Knotweed that needs clearing out.
- Mr. Chappell commented that a group in Massachusetts left some knotweed next to the water to hold the bank. The Land Trust is using All Habitats, a firm that specializes in controlling invasive plants, to help eradicate invasives on 10 – 13 acres in the Miller Preserve. Cost is $3500 per treatment.

7. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Updates

i. Stewardship and Forestry Updates – Mr. Gillis
Cleared the ADA trail with a snowblower after the first big snowstorm, but it was too much work to do it again.
Harris Trail: removed some trees.
Parking lots were not plowed out. Mr. Angersola agreed to plow some of the lots and said that they would try to plow the lots within a few days of a storm.

ii. Outreach and Promotion – Mr. Sina
See Chair's Updates – Spring Fling

iii. Climate Resilience– Mr. Olin
The grant application for the first RFI has been submitted to the Long Island Sound Partnership. The grant will help to create a natural resources data set for the East Haddam village floodplain and develop plans for nature-based solutions to reduce the impact of high water on properties on the flood plain periphery.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls
The East Haddam Fish and Game application to restore cold-water habitat to a section of the Eightmile River was approved by the IWWC. It will be sent to the Army Corps of Engineers for approval. Mr. Ventres will oversee the initial stages if it is approved.

ii. P & Z Updates – Mr. Gillis
The application for reconstructing the former Cumberland Farms store in Moodus into a convenience store with a drive-through window has been withdrawn.

iii. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina
No meeting, but Mr. Ventres sent a message that the lawyer has looked at the documents and Mr. Ventres is hoping to schedule a town meeting for the Sprecher swap and Urban Farms within a short time.

iv. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard
Nothing new to report. However, Mr. Gillis says they have some small education grants. Mr. Sina said he received an email from a second-grade teacher who wants to get the kids outside and integrate some natural science into lesson plans. He will contact the teacher.

v. Sustainability Committee– Mr. Ponanski
Earth Day week is April 17 – April 26 and includes an Arbor Day celebration on April 17, Town Wide Clean-up, Chick Day at Shagbark, and Backyard State Park Video on April 18. Seed Starting for Pollinators at Ballek's Garden Center on April 19, Oppossom Rehabilitation at First Church on April 25, Earth Day Hangout at Yankee Cider Barn on April 25 and 26. We may be able to cosponsor an event with the Sustainability Team.

c. Planting, existing garden updates– Mr. Sina
No new work because of the season.

d. Reserve Monitor Discussion– Mr. Sina
Nothing to report.

8. New Business (b)
   a. New Bills
   The following bill was submitted and approved:
   $53.57 from Shagbark for pressure treated lumber
   Motion to approve the bill as presented
   Capel/Bernard – Passed Unanimously.

   b. Discussion from Commission members
   Mr. Bernard asked if there was a way to connect the Shugrue Farm Preserve to Hayward by an easement. Mr. Ventres has apparently had some

preliminary discussions with the owner of the intervening land, but nothing is finalized yet.
Mr. Sina was asked if we know how many people use our trails. No, we do not know, but we know from how trampled down the path is, which of the preserves are most heavily used..

9. **Public Comment** (can be submitted via email to ccchair@easthaddam.org)
None.

10. **Next Meeting:** Tuesday, 7 April 2026, 7:00 PM, Meeting Room #1

11. **Adjournment**
Motion to adjourn at 8:32 PM
Bernard/Gillis – Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Martha Hansen
Recording Secretary