East Haddam Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2021
Adopted April 6, 2021

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the East Haddam Conservation Commission was held via Zoom on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at 7:30 PM. The Chairperson being in the Chair.

a. Roll Call at 7:34 PM.
Thom Delventhal, Charlotte Gelston (via phone), Bernie Gillis, Marilyn Gleeson, John Olin, Susan Pagnano, Gary Wilson
Guest: Rob Smith (via ZOOM and later via phone)

2. Appointment of Alternates: Mr. Olin was appointed to vote for Ms. Pagnano.

3. Approval of Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda as presented by Mr. Delventhal, seconded by Mr. Gillis. Motion passed. Amendments to agenda as follows:
   - Add to Old Business/Liaison Reports: iv. Eightmile updates – Mr. Gillis
   - Add to Old Business: f. Lisa Wahle update – Mr. Delventhal

   Motion by Mr. Delventhal to approve the agenda as amended. Second by Mr. Gillis and unanimously approved.

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes for 2/2/21. Motion to approve the minutes as presented by Mr. Delventhal. Second by Ms. Gelston and unanimously approved.
   - Item#4: Change Ms. Delventhal to Mr. Delventhal
   - Item#6a: added "on the red trail" and replaced "publication" with "announcing it to the public"
   - Item#6i: added "in East Haddam News", replaced "included" with "submitted", replaced "in" with "to"
   - Item#6c: add "and Master Gardener volunteers"
   - Item#6d: Change "filer" to "flyer"
   - Item#7b: replaced "Mr. Gillis' wife" with Maureen "Gillis" and replaced "seniors" with "residents"
   - Item#7c: added "partially", replaced "involvement" with "review", removed "The whole area will be called Monica's Woods (both the Town and EHLT parcels)., added "to work with EHLT Stewardship to", removed "work with the EHLT", added "partially", added "EHLT"
   - Item#7g: added "just as we currently do to Grandview Campground."
   - Item#9: added "It was noted that there was already an article in East Haddam News about it."
   - Item attachments: added "map"

   Motion by Mr. Gillis to approve the minutes as amended. Second by Mr. Delventhal and unanimously approved.

5. Old Business

a. Subcommittee updates

i) Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis

- Hatch Lot-removed tree that received email about on red trail
- Urbanik-cleared small obstructions on red and blue trails; replaced the cracked map holders; the kiosk was run into by a car and is now leaning; it will be fixed in the Spring
- Lena-installed a temporary sign at Babcock and Tater Hill
- Patrell-Pollinator Garden frame is built; it will be installed when the garden is blooming
- Rose-minor repairs at done to the kiosk
- Boot Rock-need Chapal map for the kiosk; could be the size of the "remove trash" sign; Mr. Wilson asked if we could we put things on the back of the kiosk which could be done with clearing of brush but since no one really looks on the back, we decided to put the Chapal map on the front for now. Ms. Gleeson will get a map printed and laminated for it.
- Patrell and Boot Rock-both needs trail maps which are in production at vendor along with all the other trail maps. Need IBA maps there as well which Mr. Wilson will supply.
- The grant application for Eightmile was given to Ms. Gleeson by Mr. Gillis. Ms. Gleeson will create a draft.
- Mr. Wilson submitted a grant to the Master Gardener Assoc. for $350. They will notify us by April if we get it.
- Salmon River Overlook-Pat Young of Eightmile Wild and Scenic Committee wants to put an article in Salmon River Watershed Partnership Newsletter about it. Mr. Gillis will reach out to Mr. Ventres for the history of the Overlook property

ii) Outreach and Promotion – Ms. Gleeson

- Mr. Delventhal's New England Cottontail article was sent to East Haddam News. Not sure when it will be published.
- Ms. Gleeson reminded Dave Hollahan that future articles need to display "Conservation Conversations" as our brand as this was not done with Mr. Wilson's article on invasive plants.
- Mr. Wilson just completed an article on native plants, and we are planning a future one on composting, but we need ideas for future ones. Ms. Gleeson asked Ms. Gelston to consider writing one about horseback riding on the trails. She said she would and would focus on Hatch Lot because of the length and variety of its trails.
- Mr. Delventhal will work on an expanded LeFebvre article, but it will be timed for when those trails are open. Mr. Delventhal is also trying to work with Mr. Ventres about a trail lore article.
- Mr. Gillis will talk to Dave, the TNC rep on the Eightmile Committee, about a connecting trail between Burnham and LeFebvre. There was discussion about the actual location with Mr. Smith and talk of a walk to nail that down. Expectation is that we would do most of the work on the connection. The connection would not likely need a bridge as the brook could be walked across with stones when needed.

b)Liaison Reports

i. IWWC

- Mr. Delventhal reported there was nothing pertinent to report.

ii. P&Z

- Mr. Gillis reported there is an application for a floating zone change that would allow for a 350k building in Colchester going before East Haddam P&Z on 3/17, most likely for growing

medical marijuana. It has lots of interest because the area off Rte. 85 that is being considered is in the Eightmile Watershed which will raise red flags due to chemicals, drainage and impervious surfaces. The building size is 3 ½ Home Depots! East Haddam P&Z was notified because that type of application is within 500' of East Haddam's boundary. A floating zone is a zone that can be established anywhere in the Town as long as it follows certain parameters, in this case large scale agricultural operations. This would also be a multi-story building and it might also be for non-medical marijuana. The building might be 45' tall.

- Mr. Smith reported there was discussion about the scenic road status of Beebe Road. A walk was done last Thursday with P&Z members and Mr. Smith to discuss the gravel portion of the road. The result was that once the final grading is finished on Beebe Road it will satisfy all parties. It's a gravel road with a poor base that will likely continue to have issues. There will be a heavy crown when it is done and there will be delineators. It is a heavily travelled road for a scenic road. There was no discussion about increasing the wetlands on Beebe Road. There had been previous discussion that the road had encroached on the wetland but nothing about increasing the wetland area.
- P&Z also discussed future plans for the Moodus area of Town, including installing sidewalks and a request for funding to conduct a study.

iii) Open Space Committee (a map was previously distributed and is attached)

- Ms. Gleeson provided an update on the O'Connell Road Ext. property grant from the State of CT. It was given to the Town but only for $93,000 or 30% which is lower than the 50-60% typically given. The property is 124.37 acres. It abuts the Shugrue Reserve. The State received many applicants this round and decided to give out more grants than usual, accounting for the lower grant amounts. This will make it more difficult for many recipients to raise the money to purchase the properties they want, include East Haddam, but the Town will be looking at other grants to supplement the cost. The cost of the purchase is about $325,000.
- Next steps are to get approval from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Planning and Zoning before it can go to a Referendum. Expectation is that the Referendum would not be until the Summer.
- If the Town does purchase this property, it would become the EHCC's responsibility to manage it. We would want to maintain trails on the northern portion of Shugrue to connect to new trails on this new land. The Shugrue section where we do not have trails is a hay field. We could have a path mowed in it as long as we have clear signage that keeps hikers on the path as we would want the farmers to continue to grow and mow the hay.

c)Planting/existing garden updates

- Mr. Wilson put the order in with CRCCD (CT River Coastal Conservation District, Inc) and is waiting for the invoice. The plants they said they could get are 26 shrubs/trees and 43 herbaceous perennials. Seventeen plants that we wanted remain to be ordered that they could not get but we could mostly get from the Native Plant Trust in MA. There are other places we could likely get them as well. The cost from CRCCD is $1,272. The cost of the plants we haven't yet ordered should be about $600. The growers need to wait until March to see what they can provide so the final invoice won't be available until then. The pickup dates are 4/23 and 4/24 at the Chester Fairgrounds. Mr. Wilson may need assistance with pickup. The Master Gardeners who helped are working at CRCCD.
- Mr. Wilson ordered Red Osier Dogwoods as well from Cold Stream Farm in Michigan (25 of them) for the Community Garden at a cost of about $20 (after the refund from last year's plants that failed to grow). They are bare root, 1-2 foot tall. They will grow in the summer and get re-

planted in the fall.

- Mr. Wilson will send CRCCD information to Ms. Gleeson so she can distribute to everyone.
- To pay for the plants, we have $850 from a previous grant and Ms. Gleeson will be applying for a $1000-$1500 grant from Eightmile. She needs a list of plants for the grant submission. We would match what we ask for as part of the grant requirements. Mr. Wilson applied for grant of $350 to Master Gardener Association as well.
- We also should put up signage about the various plants that is at wheelchair height. This could be part of the Eightmile grant or something we just pay for. This would also be at the lower part of the ADA path where we have the wetter soil/plants.
- All the shrubs from the Community Garden last year have been transplanted and are doing well.
- David Bingham, who is on the Salem Land Trust and a member of the Eightmile Committee, wanted to plant chestnut trees from his chestnut orchard on Eightmile properties. Suggestions from our properties are Patrell, Boot Rock, Shugrue, Lena and from EHLT, the Ayers Preserve. On Ayers it could be by the river or in a little meadow there. Mr. Gillis will mention this to Mr. Bingham at the next Eightmile meeting. These Chestnut trees came from the American Chestnut Society.

d)Eagle Scout Project update (Adirondack chairs update)

- Ms. Gleeson noted that there was another article announcing the extension of this project in East Haddam News. No new submissions have been received yet. The newspaper article was supposed to include the Mac O'Moodus cartoon but did not. Ms. Gleeson requested that the cartoon be run separately but it was turned down. The cartoon is in the flyers.

e)Map reprinting/Welcome baskets

- Ms. Gleeson has not heard anything about the welcome baskets from EDC yet.
- Ms. Gleeson is working on the large map with all the properties with trails (Town, EHLT, State) that would go in the welcome baskets. It is 11"x17" and she will distribute it to the EHCC members to look at. Because of the size, it may need to be printed in pieces. Ms. Gleeson would like feedback on what to put on the back of it.
- All maps are being reprinted. They are in process and should be ready soon.

f)Lisa Wahle update

- Mr. Delventhal reported that Ms. Wahle is willing to do a ZOOM for the public on New England Cottontail or young forests. The talk would be about 40 minutes. She could do it in April or in a June/July timeframe. Consensus was June/July as maybe it could be done in person with social distancing. Mr. Delventhal will talk to Ms. Wahle more to firm something up.
- Young forests would seem to be good topic because people might want to clear land and it could benefit New England Cottontails when it grows back with briars.
- Mr. Delventhal asked if we would we be willing to turn one of our properties into a project for young forests? Mr. Delventhal will talk to Ms. Wahle about that possibility.

6. New Business
   a. New bills-There were no new bills.
   b. 2021-2022 budget
      - Ms. Gleeson reviewed the budget for the new fiscal year which runs from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. Total budget is $28,550. Salaries and Wages ($1,200) for Recording Secretary). Purchased Property Services ($5,000) is for surveying and boundary marking of properties that have not been surveyed. Printing and Binding ($2,400) is for map printing and printing of other material such as flyers, etc. Supplies ($200) is for office supplies. Other supplies ($2,500) are for stewardship supplies. There

is $300 for Dues and Fees, $450 for Conferences, $1,000 for Community Events, such as stewardship Saturdays, Community Garden talks, etc. The CCA Adjustment of $15,500 is for large expenses such as installing parking lots, gravel, etc.

- The $6,600 takeaway you see in the far-right column of CCA Adjustment is because this amount was put into our budget by mistake and is being deducted.
- For now, we will not replace our Recording Secretary. Ms. Gleeson will take and record minutes.

c. Other
- Mr. Smith gave an update on the Transfer Station. The Town is hiring a company to evaluate direction for the future. Everything is 50 years old. The Transfer Station offices are unpleasant; the big hopper is inadequate. They are currently leasing a ramp; have added two compacting dumpsters and now have gates for protection. They may add dumpsters for cardboard and paper. It will be a substantial project.
- Ms. Gleeson is doing research on composting with Blue Earth for the Town. It will likely start small. Composting contractors typically return material to the Town. What would get returned would likely go to the Community Garden. The Town currently has a way to make topsoil using chips mixed with topsoil and dirt.
- Mr. Olin asked if composting would be organic. Blue Earth collects the scraps and returns the material, but it would not be organic. There is simply no way to ensure that the public would use organic material.
- Ms. Gleeson said Blue Earth is being used in Old Saybrook. Other towns use other companies.

7. Public Comment-the public can submit comments to CCChair@easthaddam.org
   a. No public comments were submitted at this point.
8. Next meeting – Tuesday, April 6, at 7:30 PM. via Zoom.
9. Announcements and other discussion
   a. Mr. Olin mentioned he will be completely vaccinated by end of March. Most will feel more comfortable by end of April being out and he is available to be on trails and help with planting.
   b. O'Connell Road Ext property discussion:
      - Mr. Olin thought there might be a need to educate the public about open space and its value in advance of the referendum on the O'Connell Road Ext. property, The Town must be neutral but the EHCC can present the facts and talk about the value of open space in general. The Town generally relies on EHLT to promote the project as they have done in the past.
      - Mr. Gleeson asked Mr. Olin if he was willing to write something about the value of open space. Since the referendum likely won't be until summer, we have time to prepare some articles.
      - Typically, the Town would send out an information sheet with just the facts on the property including how many houses could be built on it, what's on the property, etc. EHLT is the non-Town organization that spearheads the flyers that go out promoting a positive vote explaining what development would cost the Town versus keeping it open space. The Town could also do walks on the property so people could see how it fits into a bigger plan. The Town's Plan of Conservation and Development does stress buying open space on the eastern side of Town, so this fits there nicely.
      - Ms. Gleeson asked that if anyone knew of any land grants that the Town could apply for to let us know.
      - Mr. Gillis mentioned that the cost is about $2,000/acre which is a great deal.

Affordable housing is an issue in this State, and we can do both; buy open space and have affordable housing.
- East Haddam does not have any constraints about putting in mulit-family homes.
- We will add the topic of open space promotion to the next agenda.

c. Mr. Wilson asked about getting water tanks from Harris to Patrell for the plantings. Mr. Smith said it was possible but not sure how they can be filled. They might be able to get water from the pond or river.

10. Meeting adjourned at 9:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Gleeson
Chair, East Haddam Conservation Commission

- O'Connell Road Ext. map
- EHCC 2021-2022 Budget