East Haddam
CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 2, 2024
Municipal Office Building Room #1

1. Call to order – Called to order at 7:00 p.m.
   In attendance: Joe Sina, Bernie Gillis, Cameron Beard, Alan Ponanski, John Olin, Gary Wilson, Susan Pagnano, Barry Bernard, David Walls-YouTube, and Ruth Ziobron-YouTube.

   Absent:

2. Alternate appointments (if necessary)
3. Approval of agenda
   **Motion** to approve the agenda.
   Wilson/Ponanski Passed Unanimously

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes March 5, 2024
   **Motion** to approve the meeting minutes
   Beard/Wilson Passed Unanimously

5. General announcements
   - Commission members discussed the potential use of QR codes for kiosks and trailheads. Emphasis would be on trails with good cell service. Linda Zemienieski-Selectman's Office and Matthew Hall-IT are the only people who can upload information to the website. Over the next few months, the Commission will work with various people to put together a couple of QR codes. All maps for the Conservation Commission properties are on the town website, making it easy to link a QR code directly to those map PDFs.
   - The Board of Selectman will approve Barry Bernard's appointment to the Conservation Commission at their next scheduled meeting.
   - Mr. Beard delivered a map of all the open space to the Selectman's Office to be installed at the Municipal Office near the gymnasium entrance.
   - An article was published about no ATVs on trails. Jim Ventres-Land Use Administrator is handling vandalism and ATV problems.
   - Articles were published in the Events Magazine about birding and resiliency.
   - Reserve monitor volunteers are needed.

- Commission Members reviewed a draft CT 2025 Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Mr. Wilson proposed the idea of creating bat boxes as a potential solution to aid the local bat population. One of the first tasks would be to research the best location for a bat box, considering factors such as the required clearance from the ground. Additionally, research would be needed on the different types of boxes that could be constructed.
- A hands-on-guided vernal pool walking tour was discussed.
- Robert Hagland started planting apple trees at the Salmon River Overlook. Commission members may need to water them during the summer. Water storage containers will need to be researched. Public Works has been asked not to mow the Salmon River Outlook area.

6. Presentations from the public- There was none.
   - Mr. Ponanski read a letter from Susan Kinsman titled Master Gardener Information Table at East Haddam Community Garden, Harris Property. She proposed a Master Gardener information table at the community garden on a plot Ms. Kinsman is leasing. The Commission will review with the Selectman and Land Use offices for approval at the next meeting.

7. Old business
   a. Subcommittee updates

i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis
   - Mr. Gillis detailed updates on trail maintenance activities, including marking new trails and addressing fallen trees.
   - The Davidson gate was secured with a chain on the lock side unsuccessfully. Additional locks and chains were added to the hinge side.
   - Gelston Preserve- A new trail will be marked to circumvent the muddy part of the red trail. There was discussion of the possibility of a sign directing horses one way and people another, as bringing horses onto this new section could cause future issues due to its dampness.
   - Public Works has been contacted about the dam problem at the Urbanic property.
   - Lena-New trails have been blazed. The top one is purple and the lower one is green. The purple trail abuts the bottom of two properties that the Land Trust hopes to acquire. They lead directly up to the Land Trust's Miller Farm preserve.

ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Wilson
   - An article was published in the EH News about No ATVs on trails. Some feedback from an East Haddam resident suggested that getting kids outdoors is crucial, despite restrictions on ATV use due to state easements. There was recognition that other states fund trail maintenance and enforcement, but Connecticut lacks such support. Concerns included erosion caused by ATV misuse, with one bad spot being highlighted as an example. Logical and reasonable approaches were

discussed including education about erosion consequences. Showing the impact of erosion to better illustrate the problem was suggested.

- Publishing an article about bat boxes was discussed.
- The Spring Fling event held on March 17th was deemed successful, with the distribution of numerous maps. Suggestions for next year include providing more statistics such as trail length and acreage, promoting horseback riding on trails, and including maps indicating mushroom locations. Ms. Pagnano suggested purchasing a tent for future events for wind and sun protection.
- A mushroom forager will be contacted for a possible trail walk identifying mushrooms.

iii. Climate Resilience –Mr. Olin

- The hydrological study of Succor Brook is currently in progress, with a citizen and a technical advisory committee comprising 10 members with Goodspeed, the town, and state authorities. The advisory meetings' schedule includes addressing various aspects such as evaluating existing and future climate conditions, prioritizing flood mitigation efforts' and discussing adaption options. Public workshops are planned for June and October.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates-Mr. Walls

- Nothing new to report.

ii. P&Z updates – Mr. Gillis

- Forestry operations will now fall under the Inland Wetland Commission's purview, transitioning from planning and zoning.

iii. Open Space updates-Mr. Sina

- Nothing new to report.

iv. Eightmile Committee updates – Mr. Beard

- A significant portion of the meeting focused on a discussion of whether the Eight Mile group would consider funding grant applications involving herbicide use. It was unclear at this point whether the group would ultimately decide to fund such applications. However, if they do, they may formulate a policy to guide their decisions. The policy would establish the parameters for herbicide use. Mr. Beard stated it was not within the group's authority to directly permit or forbid herbicide use, but rather to decide whether to provide funding and under what conditions.

v. Sustainability Committee- Mr. Ponansky, Mr. Olin reported.

- The Sustainability Committee is making significant progress towards achieving gold certification as a sustainable community, focusing on equity and recycling issues. They currently hold bronze certification and are striving for silver.
- There is a discussion about a bill aiming to eliminate nips in the state, which faced challenges but is expected to resurface. The bill was discussed at a conference addressing environmental concerns, indicating strong support for its reintroduction.

c. Planting/existing garden updates – Mr. Wilson
    - There are six mulberries and three choke cherries still alive at the Salmon River Overlook, with signs of deer browsing on some plants.
    - As discussed earlier, apple trees were planted recently, and soil tests indicate a need for lime and fertilizer.
    - Plans are underway to purchase native plants to support the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District. The plants will be picked up at the end of April.
    - The Commission will have a Community Garden Plot this year which will serve as a nursery for new plantings.

d. Reserve Monitor Discussion –Mr. Sina
    - Reserve Monitors are needed. Mr. Wilson agreed to be trail monitor at Hayward.

8. New Business

a. New bills

**Motion** to approve the bill(s) as presented:
- Shagbark Lumber Statement dated 3/20/2025 for $203.47
- Shagbark Lumber receipt dated 3/21/2024 for $14.88
- Coastal Conservation District receipt for $216.00
- CCLC registration fee for John Olin for $85.00

Olin/Pagnano Passed unanimously

b. Discussion from Commission members
    - Extra heavy laminated QR code-equipped hike guides have been printed to reduce reliance on paper maps. The QR codes, when scanned, link to the East Haddam Land Trust map, allowing users to explore trails and learn about the history of the area. Plans are underway to replace existing pamphlets with QR codes that direct users to digital versions. This initiative aims to provide comprehensive information on hikes while minimizing paper waste.
    - Commission members discussed an issue regarding the disc golf course intersecting with hiking trails, suggesting the need for additional signage. While some signs are already in place at the kiosk, indicating hikers should be cautious and yield to golfers, it may be beneficial to mark all trail crossings more visibly. There have been incidents elsewhere where disc golfers collided

with hikers, emphasizing the importance of addressing this concern seriously. Proposed solutions included placing signs where trails intersect fairways, and warning hikers of potential hazards.

- The March 23rd CCLC event was discussed.
- The Commission discussed the importance of raising awareness of the town's open space, which could prompt more people to explore nearby trails. They discussed sharing this information on their Facebook page.
- Discussions suggested organizing an informative session on actionable topics like rain gardens, rain barrels, solar arrays, tree planting, and energy audits. These sessions could empower citizens to make environmentally friendly choices while also saving money. Additionally, they considered incorporating speakers from organizations like the Sierra Club or Audubon Society to educate the community further.
- The Commission discussed the importance of managing municipal open spaces effectively, considering forest health and biodiversity. Initiatives like controlled burns and tree planting could enhance habitat diversity and resilience. Moreover, they explored the idea of promoting town open spaces on welcome signs to showcase East Haddam's commitment to conservation.
- The Commission discussed potential events for Arbor Day and collaborated with local organizations like the Garden Club to distribute tree seedlings to residents.

9. Public Comment (can be sent via email to: ccchair@easthaddam.org) -There was none.

10. Next meeting: Tues. 07 May 2024 7:00 pm, Room #1

11. Adjournment

**Motion** to Adjourn at 8:59 p.m.
Gillis/Wilson Passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary