East Haddam
CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

Tuesday, May 7, 2024
Municipal Office Building Room #1

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

   Absent: Bernie Gillis, Susan Pagnano

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

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes April 2, 2024
   Motion to approve the meeting minutes with the following change(s).
   Item 6 removes "There was none."
   Wilson/Olin Passed Unanimously

5. General announcements
   - Mr. Beard clarified that Avenza software allows one to navigate through pre-existing maps, but is not used to create maps. The maps downloaded into Avenza are created with ArcGIS software.
   - Commission members discussed signage for the Land Trust and Conservation areas, noting that DEEP acknowledged receiving final suggestions and will provide updates.
   - The Urbanik Dam's condition was inspected, revealing a broken elbow in the overflow pipe, leading to a direct water flow through the dam. It was mentioned that if State officials inspect the dam, a 25-foot vegetation-free zone around the water would be required. The Commission had planted red twig dogwoods on the dam's face, chosen for their moisture preference and moderate growth, avoiding any risk to the dam's structure. The State's potential dam inspection is considered a low priority, with no immediate infrastructure at risk. The conversation also touched on the importance of removing organic material that could compromise the dam's integrity, suggesting a wait-and-see approach before making any changes to the plantings near the dam.

- The Board of Selectman approved Mr. Bernard as an alternate member to the Conservation Commission at their last meeting.

6. Presentations from the public- There were none.

7. Old business
    a. Subcommittee updates

i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis
- In Mr. Gillis's absence, updates were made by Commission members.
- Mr. Beard suggested a minor change to the new Lena map: converting a 200-foot-long white trail to orange to avoid confusion with another trail. Mr. Sina has received feedback on the brochure and plans to send it for printing.
- Two fallen trees at Rose Farm, one caused by beavers have been cleared.

ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Wilson
- An article will be written for publication in the EH News about Japanese knotweed, an invasive plant species, and to encourage its removal. Mr. Wilson noted the plant's rapid spread and the difficulty of eradication, given that a significant portion of its biomass is underground. The article will simplify identification and management, including a photo for easy recognition. Commission members also discussed the challenges posed by roadside mowing, which inadvertently spreads the plant, and the importance of addressing the problem promptly to prevent further infestation.
- Mr. Walls, having recently donated land will write an article for the East Haddam News to share his thought process and the considerations involved in such a decision.

iii. Climate Resilience –Mr. Olin
- The April 25th CIRCA's first Citizen Technical Advisory Committee meeting had good participation. The meeting addressed the flooding of Succor Brook and the suggestion to consider Boardman Pond as a catchment area for flash flooding was discussed.
- Action items for consideration: rain barrels, rain gardens, solar arrays, tree planting, and energy audits.
- The town plans to join the SolSmart solar program.
- Michele Velez at the Public Works is a contact for tree planting initiatives.
- The Sustainability team is working on energy audits, which have proven beneficial and free for residents.
- Composting and recycling were discussed as effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, with a workshop on composting scheduled for May 18th at Cold Spring Farm.
- Mr. Olin mentioned the importance of diverting food waste from landfills, a movement gaining national traction.

- Mr. Olin mentioned an article published in the East Haddam News featuring an article on lawn management for pollinator preservation and food waste diversion, reflecting the community's environmental consciousness.
- Mr. Ponanski plans on researching rain gardens and tree planting for community engagement efforts.
- There were discussions on the importance of educating residents about the types of trees and ground cover that are beneficial for their yards.
- The Commission discussed writing an article of an interview with Michele Velez from Public Works about the town's long-term plan for environmental conservation, particularly after tree-cutting activities, and the need to communicate this plan to the community to assure them that there are measures in place to maintain the local environment.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates-Mr. Walls

- The commission reviewed and approved the expansion of a parking area at the Snell-Talbot parcel to accommodate four cars. This parking lot is located at the top end of the Moodus Forest, providing access from both ends. The expansion involves cutting through a guard rail and installing bumpers and a gravel area for parking.
- A property at Honey Hill is being considered for acquisition by the land trust. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) identified hazardous materials, such as oil and antifreeze, on an old farm dump that needs to be excavated and removed. The land trust's application to perform the necessary remediation work was approved.
- There was discussion about repair work on Beebe Road due to a washout. Culverts were installed to repair the road, but concerns were raised about their placement potentially blocking fish migration between two sides of a reservoir. The culverts meet best practices but may not align with conservation goals.

ii. P&Z updates – Mr. Gillis

- Mr. Gillis was absent.

iii. Open Space updates-Mr. Sina

- The closing/purchase of the Kronberg property is expected to occur at the beginning of May. The only immediate trail planned is the one marked on the map as proposed, which will connect from North Moodus Road to other trails.
- There was a conversation about the state's expectation to see a parking area on the Onel Parcel, However, it is unclear who is responsible for this task. Typically, public works create parking lots for town parcels and coordinate between Jim Vetres and Michele Velez as needed to accomplish this.

- Questions were raised about who is responsible for putting in and maintaining the trails. It appears that the trails on school property are not the town's responsibility, but a connecting trail might fall under the town's purview.

iv. Eightmile Committee updates – Mr. Beard
- There had been no Eightmile meeting since the date of the last Conservation Committee meeting.

v. Sustainability Committee- Mr. Ponanski
- The Sustainability Committee is progressing towards achieving the silver level of sustainability, with the aspiration to reach the gold level.
- A Zoom meeting is scheduled for May 21st at 7 p.m.

c. Planting/existing garden updates – Mr. Wilson
- Planting Initiatives: The Commission has been actively involved in planting various species such as Button Bush, Gray Dogwood, and Swamp White Oaks. The Button Bush is being nurtured indoors before being moved, while the Gray Dogwood is considered for placement near the gazebo at the Salmon River Overlook.
- Swamp White Oaks: There is a plan to plant 25 Swamp White Oaks, which are valued for their longevity and acorn production that is favored by wildlife. Suitable locations with the right balance of sunlight and moisture are being sought for these trees.
- Community Garden: This is being utilized for centralized care and watering of plants, especially during the summer months. This approach allows for better growth and easier maintenance.
- Watering Strategies: The use of large water tanks for irrigation was discussed for the apple trees to ensure they receive adequate water, even during dry spells.
- Invasive Species Management: The Commission is tackling the issue of invasive species like knotweed and winged euonymus (burning bush) which are encroaching on trails and other areas. Past efforts included work parties to clear these species and planting of elderberry shrubs in wetland areas.
- Protective Measures: Protective cages are being calculated and constructed to safeguard young plants from deer and other wildlife.
- Volunteer Engagement: The Commission touched on the need for community involvement in planting and maintenance efforts. Strategies to engage local volunteers included organizing work parties and sharing resources.
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d. Reserve Monitor Discussion –Mr. Sina
- Nothing new to report.

8. New Business

a. New bills

Motion to approve the bill(s) as presented:

- Gary Wilson Home Depot charges for Salmon River Overlook tree fencing and landscape fabric installation for $155.16
- Gary Wilson plants from Cold Stream Farm Order #171471 dated 4/25/2025 for $128.51
- Essex Printing invoice #25831 dated 3/31/2024 for $162.88
- Shagbark Lumber receipt dated 4/20/2024 for $402.94

Ponanski/Olin Passed unanimously

b. Discussion from Commission members

- The Land Trust has received a $45,000 grant from the Connecticut Land Conservation Council for a climate-smart forest management project at Miller Farm, which is a three-year initiative. The project aims to remove invasive species and prepare for shelter cuts (selective clearing) to promote the growth of desirable species and increase biodiversity. This project represents a significant step towards ecological sustainability and forest health at Miller Farm.
- Black Bear Law: The group discussed the recent incidents of black bears attacking livestock and breaking into homes. They talked about the need for clarification on how to protect oneself and one's property from black bear attacks. It was noted that a permit is required to act against a bear causing damage to livestock or crops.
- Turtle Rescue: Mr. Wilson shared his experience of rescuing an Eastern-painted turtle from the road. He reminded everyone to be cautious while driving near ponds or swampy areas and advised safely moving turtles in the direction they were heading.

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

10. Next meeting: Tues. 04 June 2024 7:00 pm, Room #1

11. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 8:38 p.m.
Ponanski/Olin Passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary