East Haddam
CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 3, 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, Barry Bernard, Gary Wilson, John Olin, David Walls, and Tanya Bourgoin.
Absent: Susan Pagnano and Alan Ponanski.

2. Alternate appointments (if necessary)
Mr. Bernard was appointed for Ms. Pagnano.

3. Approval of agenda
Motion to approve the agenda.
Wilson/Olin – **Passed Unanimously**

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes August 6, 2024
Motion to approve the meeting minutes.
Wilson/Beard – **Passed**

5. General announcements

- The commission plans to laminate and post QR codes for four preserves—Gelston, Davidson, Urbanik, and Lord Wellington—and monitor their usage to determine if a small stock of physical maps should be maintained based on any feedback received. Mr. Bernard will coordinate by tracking when map supplies fall below 20 and will inform Mr. Beard to handle restocking orders. A local resident's concern over an empty map box will be addressed by considering the shift to QR codes. Additionally, Mr. Sina's wife found a map with a QR code at the middle school linking to Trailforks.com, which offers many of the commission's maps and may support real-time tracking. Further investigation will be conducted to explore how this tool can be integrated into the commission's system.
- A resident donated a granite bench in memory of her husband at the Patrell Preserve. The photo and dedication are included at the end of these meeting minutes.

6. Presentations from the public-none.

7. Old business

A. Subcommittee updates

i. **Stewardship & Forestry Management** – Mr. Gillis
- Stone was added at the Hatch and Boot Rock? parking lots, with a large hole at Hatch requiring two visits. Trees were cleared from various trails. Bog bridge was built on the Red Trail at Nichols, and a new pavilion was installed at Burnham Brook. Tree removal took place on the Rose Farm Red Trail and at Urbanik. Preparation for a bypass at the Goodwin Trail was completed before an upcoming land trust fundraiser event scheduled for early November.

ii. **Outreach & Promotion** – Mr. Wilson
- An article on possums has been submitted to East Haddam News and is expected to be published soon. There was a discussion about contributing to the next events magazine and East Haddam News with potential articles on how to get involved with the Conservation Commission, becoming a reserve monitor, and bats.

iii. **Climate Resilience** – Mr. Olin (email read by Mr. Sina)
- The Succor Brook project has made progress with a public workshop scheduled for October 24th, where engineers will present their initial findings and discuss flood remediation ideas. A recent meeting with the 10-member Advisory Board and state representatives highlighted the importance of addressing flooding impacts on the entire village, not just specific areas like Goodspeed. The workshop aimed to gather public feedback and will be followed by another session as plans and alternatives develop. The focus is on both informing the public and collecting input to guide the project's direction, which involves significant environmental and infrastructure considerations. The event will be live-streamed, and further updates will be provided as the project progresses.

B. Liaison Reports

i. **IWWC Updates** – Mr. Walls
- No updates.

ii. **P&Z updates** – Mr. Gillis
- The upcoming meeting will address the permitting of the pavilion at Burnham Brook and the redesign of handicap access at the Goodspeed Opera House, specifically focusing on modifications to improve accessibility at the Gelston House.

iii. **Open Space updates** – Mr. Sina
- No updates.

iv. **Eightmile Committee updates** – Mr. Beard
- The new pavilion at Burnham Brook is set to be a valuable venue for events, with potential needs for an awning and composting toilet. For event planning, contacting Dave Gumbart is

recommended. The pavilion is also suitable for educational trips, though parking for buses should be assessed.

v. **Sustainability Committee** – Mr. Ponanski (Mr. Sina attended the meeting and reported)
- The Sustainability Committee's efforts included exceeding Eversource energy targets by promoting free energy assessments, organizing a Repair Café with positive feedback despite modest turnout, and working on a proposal to enhance transparency and effectiveness in tree management along town roads, potentially through a dedicated tree commission.

C. Planting/existing garden updates – Mr. Wilson
- All the plants obtained from the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District sale were finally planted along the ADA Trail at Patrell. This included button bush, Joe Pye weed, gray dogwood, viburnum, and high bush cranberry. At the Hatch Lot, five oak trees and three high bush cranberries were planted, protected with fishing monofilament to deter deer. The ongoing tasks include watering the community garden plants and applying wood chips to retain moisture. Efforts also involved cutting down mature knotweed at Harris Lot and applying vinegar and salt to prevent regrowth. Some oak and cranberry trees are still available for planting if needed. Monofilament and fluorescent tape are used to protect new plantings from deer and other animals.

D. Reserve Monitor Discussion – Mr. Sina
- Nothing new to report.

8. New Business

A. New bills
Motion to approve the bill(s) as presented:
- Shagbark Lumber dated $284.13
Beard/Gillis – **Passed unanimously**

B. Discussion from Commission members
Municipal budget for Open Space tree work – Mr. Beard
- Mr. Beard proposed including in the municipal budget a paid workforce to manage open space and trails more effectively. He emphasized the need for a dedicated team to handle trail issues promptly, especially as the number of properties and trail miles increases, and current volunteers may not be sufficient. This is crucial given the ongoing problems in the preserves, including damage from invasive species and diseases. Jim Ventres supports this proposal and suggests involving an arborist to assess which trees along trails should be removed. Additionally, he proposed considering if some open space could be logged not only to improve site conditions but also to potentially generate income to support these efforts. The priorities are to first establish a crew for immediate trail problems, second, to assess trail safety and tree risks, and third, to explore forest management opportunities. It was suggested to ask Jim Ventres to participate in future meetings to provide clarity on budget integration for forest management. The commission discussed possible revenue generation through logging. There

was consensus that initial funding might need to come from the town budget but could eventually be self-sustaining through forest management revenues.
- The commission discussed historical forest changes due to climate change, highlighting the loss of tree species and the necessity for expert guidance in forest health and management. Dead tree removal near trails was identified as a pressing issue, but one that could potentially be handled by volunteers or trail monitors. The DEEP Forester for our region was mentioned as a resource for property assessments, and properties like Hatch and Lena were highlighted as prime candidates for management due to their size and accessibility.
- The commission discussed broader concerns about forest sustainability and invasive species management, particularly with knotweed, which has spread uncontrollably at the Salmon River Overlook. Different methods of addressing the knotweed problem were debated, including chemical treatments and manual removal, but no consensus was reached.

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

10. Next meeting
Tues., October 1, 2024, 7:00 p.m., Room #1

11. Adjournment
Motion to Adjourn at 8:56 p.m.
Beard/Gillis – **Passed unanimously**

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary

Bench Dedication on following page.

This contemplative granite bench was placed at Patrell Preserve in memory of M. A. Moore by his loving family. The Conservation Commission gratefully accepts this donation on behalf of the Town.



Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary