East Haddam
CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

Tuesday, October 1, 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, David Walls, Susan Pagnano, Alan Ponanski, Pat Capel, and Tanya Bourgoin.
Absent: John Olin

2. Alternate appointments (if necessary)

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

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes September 3, 2024
Motion to approve the meeting minutes.
Wilson/Pagnano – **Passed Unanimously**

5. General announcements

- **QR Codes for Trail Maps:** Laminated QR codes for trail maps were installed at four preserves (Urbanik Reserve, Lord Wellington Reserve, Davidson Memorial Walking Park, and Gelston Easement). These QR codes link directly to the town's website, providing a brochure with a static map. The Commission will monitor user feedback on the new format and evaluate the need for printed maps if users indicate a preference.
- **Trail Navigation Apps:** Members will test two apps, AllTrails and Trailforks, for GPS trail navigation. AllTrails provides users with trail statistics such as length and elevation, while Trailforks offers real-time location tracking using GPS. Members are encouraged to provide feedback at the next meeting.
- **Salmon River Forest Walk:** The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) scheduled a Salmon River Forest walk on October 8, 4-5 p.m., with an RSVP required 48 hours in advance. The walk will focus on potential forest management activities, including selective thinning to improve tree health and forest sustainability.
- **Goodwin Trail Challenge:** Scheduled for November 10th. Commission members will review with Eversource trail access.

- **Shugrue Farm Reserve on Long Hill:** DEEP Forester is walking the property on November 4th at 9 a.m.
- **Salmon River Overlook:** Work party scheduled for October 5th.
- **Hand Property:** Commission members met with Kim Bradley from DEEP's Recreational Trail Division, and Ray Knoop, supervisor for the state parks within East Haddam, and discussed a proposed trail that would connect the Devil's Hopyard trails, which have a trailhead on Michell Road, to the town's Lena Reserve to the south. The trail would pass through the Hand Property, which was recently acquired by the State. The DEEP representatives viewed the proposed route positively, and also confirmed that the state would cover the cost of materials for two necessary bridges. However, it was clarified that the town would need to construct the bridges and maintain the trail itself.
- **Motion:** proceed to take the steps necessary for the town to be the applicant via the Conservation Commission for permission to construct the trail on the Hand property with the State of Connecticut's support.
  Beard/Ponanski – **Passed Unanimously**
- **Hats:** The idea of getting new hats was proposed. Mr. Sina will contact an embroidery company for pricing. Color options were discussed.

6. Presentations from the public - none.

- **Volunteers:** Pat Capel offered to monitor a few trails and volunteer during work parties. A high school senior has volunteered to clean up a trail as part of her senior project (Lord Wellington Reserve and Sabine Reserve). The Commission will contact her. Mr. Gillis suggested fixing the parking lot with stone.

7. Old business

A. **Subcommittee updates**

i. **Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis**

Some members reported encountering poison ivy while clearing areas, but overall, significant progress was made in maintaining trails and addressing fallen trees. A small footbridge was constructed to improve access, and there were discussions about marking trails more clearly and tackling debris at Winterbrooke, where a cleanup project is planned. Additionally, the need for signs indicating hunting season closures was highlighted.

ii. **Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Wilson**

Mr. Walls's article on the Virginia opossum was published in the East Haddam News. Future article ideas were discussed. An article on bats is in progress for Halloween, and there was interest in publicizing QR codes for trails. The group suggested waiting for feedback before deciding on specific articles, with a focus on highlighting local open space parcels like Hayward Reserve in the upcoming events magazine. Members are encouraged to share their ideas for future articles, including topics like vernal pools for spring activities.

iii. **Climate Resilience – Mr. Olin (was absent)**

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.

B. **Liaison Reports**

i. **IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls**

The Wetland Commission reviewed and approved upgrades to Goodspeed, which included a study assessing how these improvements would perform during a 100-year storm event. The upgrades aimed to enhance the appearance of the facility, including the installation of handicap access at the front and a complete overhaul of the parking lot, which currently experiences significant sheet flow during rainstorms. To address this issue, the plan involved grinding up the existing pavement to create a subsurface along the river and installing drainage piping to manage the sheet flow.

ii. **P&Z updates – Mr. Gillis**

No updates.

iii. **Open Space updates – Mr. Sina**

No updates.

iv. **Eightmile Committee updates – Mr. Beard**

Recent trail routing improvements and a new wheelchair-accessible path leading to a scenic overlook were highlighted. The wheelchair-accessible trail will enhance access for all visitors to view the Southwest overlook at Burnham Brook.

v. **Sustainability Committee – Mr. Ponanski**

No updates.

C. **Planting/existing garden updates – Mr. Wilson**

- **Patrell ADA Trail Plantings:** Recently planted species include Button Bush, Joe Pye Weed, Gray Dogwood, Viburnum, and High Bush Cranberry, chosen for their adaptability to the local environment and benefits to pollinators.
- **Community Garden and Pollinator Meadow:** Ongoing maintenance tasks include controlling invasive species like Ragweed and Goldenrod while allowing native plants to thrive. The pollinator meadow was left in a semi-natural state to encourage biodiversity.
- **Black Walnut and Swamp White Oak Trees:** Members discussed additional planting locations, such as Salmon River Overlook, to expand shade and habitat. A potential community plant giveaway event was also suggested for spring, providing native tree saplings for public planting.

D. **Reserve Monitor Discussion – Mr. Sina**

- **New Reserve Monitor Appointment:** Pat Capel has volunteered to monitor Sabine Reserve, offering to assist with reporting and minor trail maintenance. The Commission noted the importance of timely reporting on trail conditions, particularly during high-use seasons.

8. New Business

A. **New bills**

Motion to approve the bill(s) as presented:

- Shagbark Lumber dated $139.32
  Gillis/Pagnano – **Passed Unanimously**

B. **Discussion from Commission members**

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

10. Next meeting
Tues., November 5, 2024, 7:00 p.m., Room #1
Motion to cancel the November 5th meeting due to elections.
Ponanski/Gillis – **Passed Unanimously**
The next meeting is scheduled for December 3, 2024, 7:00 p.m., Room #1

11. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn at 8:29 p.m.
Wilson/Gillis – **Passed Unanimously**

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary