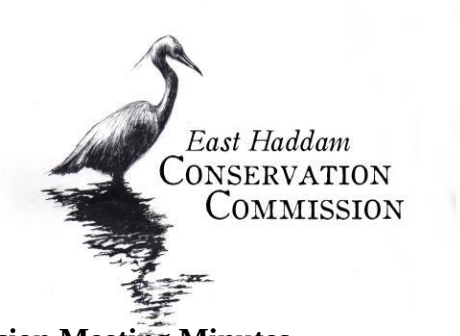


Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Date: Tuesday, February 4, 2025
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: Municipal Office Building, Room #1

1. **Call to Order**
   The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Gary Wilson.
2. **Roll Call and Alternate Appointments**
   Members Present: Gary Wilson, Bernie Gillis, Barry Bernard, David Walls, Cameron Beard, John Olin, Susan Pagnano, and Alan Ponanski.
   Members Absent: Joe Sina.
   Guests:
   Alternate Appointments: David Walls was appointed alternate.
3. **Approval of Agenda**
   Motion to approve the agenda, adding Lifeforms Presentation by Mr. Olin under 8b.
   Ponanski/Walls – Passed Unanimously.
4. **Approval of Minutes**
   Motion to approve the Conservation Commission meeting minutes of January 7, 2025.
   Pagnano/Gillis – Passed Unanimously.
5. **General Announcements**
   • The Commission recognized Bernie and Maureen Gillis being honored as "Humanitarians of the Year" by the East Haddam Community Lions Club.
   • A Connecticut Land Conservation Conference (CLCC) is scheduled for March 22nd at Wesleyan University. Commission members expressed interest, and there was a discussion about the potential to rotate who attends each year. There was a discussion on whether to donate to the CLCC on a yearly basis or make it a part of the budget.
   • There was clarification that the commission cannot use the purchased property services budget line item unless specifically designated, but there is a special revenue fund of approximately $15,000 (from a harvest) that can be used for forestry management services, with the condition that any project over $7,000 requires additional approval, while projects under that amount can be approved by the commission for tasks such as dangerous tree removal.
6. **Presentations from the Public**
   No public presentations were made.

7. **Old Business**
   a. Subcommittee Updates
   i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis
   • Trails were cleared of fallen trees/limbs. Completed repairs to the White Trail bridge at Sabine Reserve.
   • Rose Farm: Beaver activity managed near the bridge.
   • Lena Access: ATV/motorcycle activity traced; access concerns addressed.
   • Sabine Area: Problem area filled and stabilized.

ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Wilson
• An article on monarch butterflies is scheduled for publication in the spring.
• QR code awareness will be promoted in the upcoming Events Magazine.
• An article on snakes has been submitted for publication in the East Haddam News.
• The Spring Fling is scheduled for March 23rd. The Conservation Commission will have a table with maps and information, possibly raffling off birdhouses made from donated wood.

iii. Climate Resilience – Mr. Olin
• The next public meeting for the Succor Brook project is scheduled for February 5, 2025, at 6:30 at the Municipal Office. The workshop will present final strategies for addressing flooding, seeking public input before finalizing plans. The project aims to secure federal grants, with a March 14th deadline for funding applications.

8. **Liaison Reports**
   a. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls
   • An application is under review for a proposed 15-foot bridge at the Mangano-Mazzella Preserve, which will cross a stream, typically flowing year-round.

b. P&Z Updates – Mr. Gillis
• Discussions about the Colchester Turnpike cell tower continue.

c. Open Space Updates – Mr. Wilson reviewed comments from Mr. Sina
• The Open Space Committee recommends proceeding with a land swap involving 5.6 acres to Mr. Sprecher in exchange for 2.2 acres to the Town as well as conservation easement along the Dean property which will connect the Harris and Dean properties using Parker Road. Since it is a swamp it would not require a referendum.
• Discrepancies were found in boundary surveys for Kronberg and Hayward. New surveys and updated documentation, including Title Insurance, are being provided to finalize conservation easements and State reimbursement as previously agreed.

d. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard
• No updates.

e. Sustainability Committee – Mr. Ponanski
• Mr. Olin shared that a regional sustainability meeting was held in Essex, focusing on

energy efficiency with participation from various River Cog towns. The meeting was successful, and the next gathering will address regional recycling efforts.

9. **Planting and Existing Garden Updates – Mr. Wilson**
   • No new plants have been ordered this year. There are still 15 high-bush cranberries and 3 swamp white oak that need to be planted before considering new additions to the nursery.
10. **Reserve Monitor Discussion**
    • No updates.
11. **New Business**
    a. New Bills:
    Motion to approve the following invoice:
    • Shagbark bills totaling $217.83 for materials for the bridges at Nichols.
    Beard/Gillis – Passed Unanimously.

    Motion to approve the following invoice:
    • $79.75 for printing Lena Preserve brochures.
    Gillis/Pagnano – Passed Unanimously.

b. Discussion from Commission Members:
Life Forms Presentation – Mr. Olin
• Mr. Olin discussed a new project with Josh Garlic, the founder of a company called Life Forms, which is focused on combining science and art, particularly through animation and fieldwork. The aim is to integrate this approach into local school curricula and conservation efforts, potentially through a watershed grant.
• The collaboration would involve schools, the conservation commission, and the 8 Mile River organization, with no immediate funding required from the commission. A video and presentation about the project will be shared for further understanding.

Other Discussions:
• Mr. Wilson built five bird boxes and is considering making wood duck boxes. He discussed the importance of rough-cut wood for ventilation and bird access.
• State Forester David Iran from DEEP will visit the Hatch Lot property on February 20th at 9 AM to discuss forest management, focusing on overgrown areas and possible options.

12. **Public Comment**
    No public comments were received.
13. **Next Meeting**
    The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 7:00 PM in Room #1.
14. **Adjournment**
    Motion to adjourn at 8:16 PM.
    Gillis/Walls – Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary