



## **Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Tuesday, August 5, 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 Chair Joe Sina.

### **2. Roll Call and Alternate Appointments**

**Members Present:** Joe Sina, Bernie Gillis, Barry Bernard, John Olin, David Walls, and Cameron Beard.

**Members Absent:** Alan Ponanski, and Susan Pagnano.

**Guests:** Pat Capel.

**Alternate Appointments:** Mr. Bernard was seated for Mr. Ponanski. Mr. Walls was seated for Ms. Pagnano.

### **3. Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda as presented.

**Gillis/Walls – Passed Unanimously.**

### **4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes from July 1, 2025**

**Motion** to approve the minutes as presented.

Favor: Sina, Gillis, Bernard, Olin, Walls

Oppose: None

Abstain: Beard

Motion passed.

**Gillis/Bernard – Passed Unanimously.**

### **5. Chair's Updates**

QR code sheets for preserves were distributed to members to post at trail kiosks. Some preserves like Nichols Trail have multiple kiosks.

Commission members discussed reappointments, noting that several terms were not renewed last year and need to be corrected retroactively. Some members will be reappointed through June 2026, while others will serve through June 2027.

**a. New member application**

**Motion** to recommend that Pat Capel's application move forward to the Board of Selectman as an alternate on the Conservation Commission.

Walls/Bernard

Passed unanimously.

**6. Old Business**

**a. Subcommittee Updates**

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

Mr. Gillis reported maintenance and trail work at several locations. Weed whacking was done at Roaring Brook, Gelston Preserve, Shagrue, and around various kiosks and trail entrances. Trail blazing was updated on the red trail at Gelston, replacing pink markings. A damaged string trimmer was repaired. Wood preservative was applied to the picnic table at Hatch. Trees were removed or identified for removal at multiple sites including Harris, Roaring Brook, Shagrue, Hatch, and Patrell. A second sign was installed at Hayward to improve visibility, with plans to reposition the post closer to the road. Trail conditions were also monitored at Nichols, Hayward, and other preserves.

At Salmon River Outlook, the town appears to have done a second round of mowing, but additional work is needed to clear paths to the apple trees and weed inside the cages. One tree may be overgrown. The site usually sees occasional casual use as a rest spot, not for hiking. The commission discussed the idea of adding a picnic table and signage to make the area more inviting, with tarps used to control vegetation.

There was a report of motorbike activity at Roaring Brook, but no evidence was found during follow-up, and no additional complaints have been received.

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

Mr. Sina noted that the Vernal Pools article was accidentally omitted from the East Haddam News but has since been published. The Monarch article is expected to appear soon. Members were encouraged to submit additional write-ups on wildlife or related topics for future publication.

### **iii. Climate Resilience – Mr. Olin**

The CIRCA climate resilience report is now available on the town website. The FEMA BRIC grant is no longer being pursued. Goodspeed is exploring long-term plans involving the Chevy building, including relocating facilities from a flood-prone area, and creating a clear channel to reduce flooding along Norwich Road, with potential support from State Brownfield funding.

### **b. Liaison Reports**

#### **i. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls**

Nothing new to report.

#### **ii. P&Z Updates – Mr. Gillis**

Nothing new to report.

#### **iii. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina**

Nothing new to report.

#### **iv. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard**

Mr. Gillis reported that the Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Committee discussed plans for Riverfest, scheduled for mid-October. They plan to consolidate outreach materials with the Land Trust at a shared table. Funding for next year is secured, and remaining funds from the previous cycle are being allocated to various projects before the September deadline. Commission members were invited to suggest ideas for future grant proposals.

The commission briefly discussed potential trail connections from the Lefebvre Preserve to Burnham Brook. It also discussed the status of the proposed trail from Lena Reserve to Devil's Hopyard via the State's Hand Property. While the area is considered a high priority due to its scenic value, progress is slow with respect to both trails due to trail approval delays. Other brief updates included expansion of the Goodwin Trail on Trail Finder and ongoing efforts by the Army Corps to manage hydrilla in local waterways.

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

Mr. Olin reported that the committee is preparing to submit its application for gold certification, with all required components expected to be in place this month.

#### **c. Planting/Existing Garden Updates – Mr. Sina**

Gary, collaborating with a Master Gardener intern, has been managing the pollinator garden and community garden. Key tasks include cutting back mugwort and managing overgrowth of meadowsweet and bayberry. Viburnum and black walnut saplings need planting this fall, with potential sites being Salmon River Overlook

and Hatch Lot. Viburnum prefers moist, sunny areas and may work well as screening plants near the gazebo or picnic area.

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

The reserve monitor for Lena is stepping down due to personal reasons, so a replacement is needed.

**7. New Business**

**a. New Bills**

The following bill(s) were submitted and reviewed:

\$345.00 to Essex Design.

\$495.00 to Essex Printing.

\$44.23 to Shagbark for supplies.

\$48.75 and \$75.00 to Essex Printing for QR Codes.

**Motion** to approve the bill(s)

**Beard/Bernard – Passed Unanimously.**

**b. Discussion from Commission Members**

The commission briefly discussed the idea of updating the trail maps and booklet. The existing paper booklet is outdated, and any updates would need to be hosted on official town sites, with challenges around distribution and maintenance. A digital format might be easier to update and distribute, but printed copies remain appealing for use in the field and educational purposes.

**8. Public Comment**

No public comments were received via email or in person.

**9. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 2, 2025, at 7:00 PM in Room #1.

**10. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn at 8:08 PM.

**Walls/Sina – Passed Unanimously.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

E. Ruth Ziobron

Recording Secretary