Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Date: Tuesday, October 7, 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, Alan Ponanski, Cameron Beard, Pat Capel, John Olin, and David Walls.
Members Absent: Susan Pagnano.
Guests: Ralph Chappell,

Alternate Appointments: David Walls was seated as an alternate for the meeting.

3. Approval of Agenda
Motion to approve the agenda as presented.
Bernard/Ponanski – Passed Unanimously.

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes from September 2, 2025
Motion to approve the minutes as presented.
Beard/Bernard – Passed Unanimously.

5. Chair's Updates
The issue of electric bikes (e-bikes) on Commission trails—especially in connection with the Goodwin Challenge—was discussed. Commissioners debated permitting pedal-assisted e-bikes (Class 1 and 2) for non-competitive use only, with conditions and post-event trail inspections.
Hunting-allowed signage has been installed at trail kiosks. No public objections have been reported. The plan is to remove signs at the end of hunting season and reinstall them annually for public safety visibility.

6. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Updates

i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis

Mr. Gillis reported trail maintenance work including weed whacking, mowing, and removing a downed tree.

ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Sina

Hunting signage announcements were published in local media. A hiking app article is pending publication. RiverFest tabling is scheduled for October 18; maps, banners, and QR code signs will be distributed. Coordination with Land Trust displays was discussed to maintain distinction while benefiting from adjacency.

iii. Climate Resilience – Mr. Olin

CIRCA communicated potential state funding to support elements from the Succor Brook resilience study, including structural improvements and land cleanup. Goodspeed, the town, and RiverCOG are engaged in follow-up. The town's update to its POCD now includes mandated climate resilience components. The Commission recognized overlap with Redevelopment Agency strategies, particularly in the use of the Chevy building site and village revitalization efforts.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls

There was no report.

ii. P&Z Updates – Mr. Gillis

Moodus Village redevelopment remains a focal point. Commissioners were encouraged to attend upcoming public planning sessions.

iii. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina

The Urban Farm Nature Preserve transaction (between the brook and Sheepskin Hollow Road) is finalized with existing funds, pending town meeting approval.

iv. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard

RiverFest preparations are underway. The commission discussed access and parking at the campground. A new Recreational Trails Grant round opens in December. Pat Young was recognized with a conservation collaboration award.

v. Sustainability Committee – Mr. Ponanski

East Haddam was awarded the Gold Standard for resiliency. A celebration is scheduled for October 28 at the Goodspeed Opera House. Committee initiatives include Repair Cafés, a community events calendar, composting petitions to the Board of Selectmen, and promotion of pollinator pathway signage.

c. Planting/Existing Garden Updates – Mr. Sina
All infrastructure and materials have been removed from the Community Garden plot. With low participation, the plot will not be renewed. Water pressure issues caused delays in output due to drought; town crews made repairs once parts were available.

d. Reserve Monitor Discussion – Mr. Sina
Reserve monitors are needed.

7. New Business

a. New Bills
The following bill(s) were submitted and reviewed:
$50.00 for QR code signs.

$189.51 to Shagbark for supplies.

Motion to approve the bill(s)
Ponanski/Beard – Passed Unanimously.

b. Discussion from Commission Members
Given limited volunteer capacity, the Commission debated focusing efforts for next year. Suggestions included enhancements to the Salmon River site (picnic table, knotweed control), installing a kiosk at the Kromberg property, and maintaining the Hatch ADA pollinator trail. Outreach to current Land Trust volunteers as additional workforce was proposed.

Commissioners expressed concern that the Eversource line replacement includes larger visibility spheres over the river and may significantly alter the visual landscape and affect wildlife habitat. They recalled that earlier installations may have been approved without due public hearing. Several members advocated exploring alternate solutions—such as burying the lines under the river—and ensuring public scrutiny. The consensus was to request a formal hearing and to collaborate with the Board of Selectmen to submit the town's request to the Siting Council in a timely manner.

Motion to authorize Mr. Olin to prepare a draft letter for the Board of Selectmen recommending that East Haddam request a public hearing from the Connecticut Siting Council on the proposed Eversource transmission line replacement project across the river.
Olin/Ponanski – Passed Unanimously.

8. Public Comment

No public comments were received via email or in person.

9. Next Meeting
The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at 7:00 PM in Room #1.

10. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn at 8:17 PM.
Beard/Ponanski – Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary