Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Date: Tuesday, November 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 Chair Joe Sina.

2. Roll Call and Alternate Appointments

Members Present: Joe Sina, Bernie Gillis, Barry Bernard, Cameron Beard, Pat Capel, John Olin, and David Walls.
Members Absent: Susan Pagnano.
Guests: Ralph Chappell, Nancy Kalai, Aidan Behilo

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

3. Approval of Agenda
Motion to approve the agenda modified to have public comment inserted after approval of minutes.
Gillis/Walls – Passed Unanimously.

4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes from October 7, 2025
Motion to approve the minutes as presented.
Walls/Gillis – Passed Unanimously.

5. Presentation from Public
Nancy Kalai made a brief presentation on the capabilities of her ox Red to haul materials out of or into a site on our preserves with minimal environmental damage compared with motorized equipment. At present Red is able to drag approximately 100 pounds. One idea was to selectively harvest trees, then drag them out of the woods to where they could be loaded onto a truck. There was a question as to whether this would be economically feasible at this point. There was also a suggestion that when we need to build a bridge, for instance, Red could haul

materials that otherwise would have to be carried in by hand. The Commission will keep the possibility of using Red in mind as the need arises.

6. Chair's Updates

The meeting schedule for 2026 was reviewed and approved. It will be forwarded to the Town Clerk for filing.

A new person is being sought by the Town to serve as administrative assistant for the Commission. In the interim, the Chair will prepare the minutes.

A question was raised from the floor on last month's discussion of allowing ebikes on the trails for the Goodwin Challenge. Those involved stated that there was no negative feedback and that the trails did not seem to be damaged in any way. The event was quite successful in terms of enjoyment by the participants, as well as fund-raising.

7. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Updates

i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis

Mr. Gillis reported trail maintenance work including weed whacking, mowing, and removing downed trees. He also constructed a bog bridge at Hatch and removed some trash abandoned next to one of the parking lots.

ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Sina

An article comparing various hiking apps has been submitted to the E. Haddam News and should appear soon. A call was made for articles on subjects of interest by any of the Commission members for either the Events magazine or the E. Haddam News.

iii. Climate Resilience – Mr. Olin

Mr. Olin reported that the town has applied for a DEEP grant of approximately $600,000 to design a plan to address the flooding at the Goodspeed rehearsal hall. A meeting of CIRCA, the Town, and Goodspeed is scheduled for 10 Nov to discuss this. The work on the grant to develop educational tools will be presented for review on 14 November. The first deliverable was a digital presentation and field work with students. This already has been done with favorable results.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls

There were no issues discussed of relevance to the Conservation Commission.

ii. P&Z Updates – Mr. Gillis

There were no issues discussed of relevance to the Conservation Commission.

iii. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina
A Town meeting is being scheduled to vote on purchasing the Urban Farm Nature Preserve and approving a land swap with Mr. Sprecher.

iv. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard
RiverFest was very successful. The attendance was better than in previous years. There was much public interest in the digital maps for both the Conservation Commission and the Land Trust properties, although some still preferred the paper maps. Some of our maps have changed, but these need to be updated on our large display.

v. Sustainability Committee – Mr. Olin for Mr. Ponanski
The letter in support of an extended period for public comment on the replacement of Eversource's transmission lines across the river is now being coordinated by the Gateway Commission. We will be informed as the issue proceeds.

c. Planting/Existing Garden Updates – Mr. Sina
Areas around the Hatch parking lot and overlook were checked and made ready for the winter.

d. Reserve Monitor Discussion – Mr. Sina
Reserve monitors are still needed for some of our preserves.

8. New Business

a. New Bills
The following bill(s) were submitted and reviewed:
$159.69 to Shagbark for supplies.

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

b. Discussion from Commission Members
Given limited volunteer capacity, the Commission discussed focusing efforts for next year. Suggestions centered on placing benches, opening up views, etc. on various preserves to make them more welcoming for the public, including families who might want shorter hikes or areas to enjoy. It was also suggested that areas that were surrounded by housing might be connected and enhanced so that a larger population would be aware of and enjoy the space in their own neighborhood. Over the next few meetings the Commission will firm up plans to be carried out in the Spring.

A **Motion** was made to authorize a letter in support of the East Haddam Land Trust, Inc (EHLT) for funding under the DEEP Recreational Trails Grant program to construct a trail accessible to the elderly and disabled that would lead from the roadside across the street from the East Haddam Senior Center to a wetlands viewing platform on the Golet Preserve.
Gillis/Olin – Passed Unanimously.

9. Public Comment
No public comments were received via email. Mr. Aidan Behilo, present at the meeting, stated that he would be interested in becoming involved with the projects of the Conservation Commission. His contact information will be added to the email list for Commission work parties, etc.

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

11. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn at 8:32 PM.
Beard/Capel – Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joseph Sina
Chair