East Haddam
CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

Conservation Commission Meeting
Minutes Date: Tuesday, June 2, 2026
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: Municipal Office Building, Room #1

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by Chair Joe Sina. Mr. Sina welcomed guests and members.

2. Roll Call and Alternate Appointments

Members Present: Joe Sina, Cameron Beard, Barry Bernard, Bernie Gillis, John Olin, David Walls
Members Absent: Pat Capel, Susan Pagnano, Alan Ponanski
Guests: Ralph Chapell
Alternate Appointments: David Walls was seated as an alternate for the meeting.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda as presented.
Gillis/Walls, Passed Unanimously.

4. **Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes from 5 May 2026. Motion** to approve the minutes with one correction in Chair's Updates, paragraph 5: Eric Hansen, not David Irvin, was the forester who looked at the Shugrue Preserve and will provide assistance with the grant.
Beard/Gillis, Passed Unanimously

5. Presentations from the Public – none

6. Chair's Updates

- Susan Pagnano cannot make most of the meetings and will submit a resignation letter. She would like to be kept on the email distribution list for information, etc. An alternate will move up into her place, and then we will need a new alternate.
- The current administration does not recommend expanding our membership, due to the difficulty of having a quorum. We would like to expand because we do a lot of work for the Commission and need more help. There may be someone at the Sportsmen's Club who would like to be an alternate, attend meetings and lend a hand, please ask around.
- Mr. Chappell asked if the Commission has the ability to have subcommittees consisting of people who are not on the Commission – such as communications, trail maintenances, etc. The Land Trust has members who serve on committees but are not on the board. Mr. Sina said that the Land Trust is an organization that depends on volunteer support for a good cause. The Conservation Commission is part of town government and spends taxpayer money, so it is different. There may also be a problem with insurance.
- The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) acknowledged our $250 donation.
- The Board of Selectmen renewed the terms of Mr. Sina, Mr. Beard, Mr. Bernard, and Mr. Olin for two years, expiring June 30, 2028.

- Mr. Beard communicated with Valerie Belles, Finance Director, about applying for the DEEP Resilient Forests Management Grant. It is a reimbursement grant, and the Board of Finance needs to consent to our applying for it. The grant is available to towns with populations under 50,000 and will help address poor conditions in the forest. The Shugrue Preserve is carpeted with barberry and has many substandard trees. Eric Hansen, a private forester or technical service provider (TSP), has seen Shugrue, and will help us prepare our application to DEEP, with reference to the work outlined in the practice plan for the property prepared by state forester David Irvin. Among the tasks that Mr. Hansen will perform is estimating the total cost of the work to be done. This figure is required for purposes of the application and also for purposes of advising the Board of Finance of the dollar amount we would be applying for (up to the maximum of $150,000). Mr. Hansen would also administer any work actually performed under the grant, including overseeing the work done by the various contractors who would have to be engaged. If the grant is awarded, the town would have to pay contractor invoices when submitted; however, the town would be reimbursed quarterly. Mr. Hansen's fees for administering the work done under the grant would be reimbursable under the grant. His work for assisting in the preparation of our application would be rolled into those reimbursable fees; however, if we do not receive the grant his fees for preparing the grant application could be covered from our contingency fund, which still has $5,000 in it.
  Motion to apply for the DEEP Resilient Forests Management Grant contingent on the consent of the Board of Finance.
  Gillis/Bernard, Passed Unanimously

7. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Updates

i. Stewardship and Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis

Chapal Farm – a tree was down, took care of it.
Mr. Bernard reported a truck load of trash on the Goodwin Trail.
Kronberg kiosk installed
Mr. Gillis and Ms. Pagnano hiked the Goodwin Trail on the other side of Salem Rd and cleared 2 trees.
Weed wacked Kronberg trail, took up tracks, and marked hiking trails.
The town will be inheriting some land by Clark Gates Road connecting to Hidden Valley, we are already responsible for the Kronberg property.
Lena Reserve has some big trees down on the blue trail, Mr. Gillis weed wacked around the kiosk and map box.
Nichols red trail to Trowbridge - pruned a lot
Roaring Brook and Florida Road have been weed wacked by the power lines.
Mr. Bernard reported 6 trees down at the Hatch Reserve

ii. Outreach and Promotion – Mr. Sina

An article on the Value of Native Plants will be published in the East Haddam News as a collaboration between the Conservation Commission and the Sustainability Committee. Mr. Ponanski wrote an article on the Homegrown National Parks. Mr. Gillis may write something on land swaps for the East Haddam Events magazine.
Mr. Walls suggested letting people know that maintaining the trails involves hard work and some money. The town has 25 miles of trails kept clear by Mr. Gillis. That does not happen by accident, it requires hard work. If you enjoy working in the woods, contact us. If we put that message out we might be able to get more trail monitors.
Mr. Beard would like to create a binder with information about all the trails and preserves.

iii Climate Resilience– Mr. Olin

Mr. Olin reported that although we did not get the Long Island Sound grant for planning support, we have been encouraged to reapply. We have been told that we provided too much

information and it needs to be simplified into one paragraph that can be given to a contractor. He will meet with Stephanie Cobleigh, who has a background in environmental engineering, to work on simplifying it.

We are still waiting to hear from DEEP if we got the $650,000 grant to widen the Creamery Road culvert. Regarding the Eight Mile River School Project grant – we had an open house with a display in January. Shaleen Thody's class did some projects on nature-based observations and used about half of the $5,000 grant.

b. Liaison Reports

iii. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls

Mr. Walls reported that he did a field walk on a large parcel where Mr. Casner is proposing a development. It is across the street from the skating pond, and behind Eddie's Auto. Not sure how many units are proposed, the plan has not been finalized. There are some wetlands there. A state forester looked at it and took soil samples to check mineral content and soil type. Mr. Gillis said Mr. Casner came before P& Z to talk about the project. Mr. Walls read the soil report and will send it to Mr. Gillis. Mr. Olin said it would impact future application grants for wetlands in the village. He would like to see the report too. Mr. Walls said there will be significant disruption to the area, and it will affect the grants. The Connecticut River floodplain is under the control of FEMA, which complicates things. Mr. Sina commented that there are remnants of a mill where Succor Brook goes under Town Street.

iv. P & Z Updates – Mr. Gillis – nothing relevant to this committee

v. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina

Once the budget is passed, Mr. Ventres says the Sprecher swap and Urban Farm will come up at a Town Meeting as soon as it can be scheduled, probably in late June or early July.

vi. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard said that there are goats on the Ayers Preserve from Raptor Ridge Farm in Lebanon CT. They are at their 4th or 5th spot. They eat the multiflora rose leaves but not the sticks. If the plants are defoliated several times they are diminished and easier to eradicate.

vii. Sustainability Committee– Mr. Ponanski - no update

8. New Business

a. New Bills

Bill from Shagbark for $54.44 for plywood and screws for a kiosk

Bill from East Haddam Land Trust for $58.75 to reimburse them for the maps from Essex Printing.

Motion to approve the bills as presented

Gillis/Walls, Passed Unanimously.

b. Discussion from Commission members – Mr. Olin has some extra maps. He has not been to Hatch, Chapman Pond, Rose Farm, or Dean in a few months. Mr. Bernard has plenty of maps and will take some if Mr. Olin does not want them.

c. Mr. Walls commented that we only seem to talk about trails and not about wildlife and birds, etc. We are the Conservation Commission. He is a rehabber and his cages are full. Let's look at how we can create habitats and put that on next month's agenda. Mr. Ponanaski's article on Homegrown National Parks will be published in the June 11 issue of the East Haddam News.

9. **Public Comment** (can be submitted via email to ccchair@easthaddam.org) None.

10. **Next Meeting:** Tuesday, 07 July 2026, 7:00 PM, Meeting Room #1

11. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn at 8:16 PM
Gillis/Olin, Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully
Submitted, Martha
Hansen