East Haddam
CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Date: Tuesday, May 5, 2026
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: Municipal Office Building, Room #1

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 7:03 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, Pat Capel, Bernie Gillis, John Olin, Alan Ponanski,
Members Absent: Susan Pagnano, David Walls
Guests: Ralph Chapell, Amalia Shaltiel
Alternate Appointments: Barry Bernard was seated as an alternate for the meeting.

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

4. **Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes from 7 April 2026.**
Motion to approve the minutes.
Gillis/Bernard: Passed Unanimously.

5. Presentations from the Public – none

Discussion with Sustainability Committee: East Haddam has attained Gold Certification as a Climate Leader thanks to the leadership of Amalia Shaltiel, and the work of the committee members. Ms. Shaltiel spoke about the Sustainability Committee's recent successful Repair Café, creating a community calendar to help coordinate activities among different town groups, land stewardship, understory preservation, pollinator pathways, Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park initiative, and promoting a master plan for our environment. The Committee will have a table in all 5 Heritage Markets this summer. They have a big map of the town, its open space, and individual properties. Participants in the Homegrown National Park and/or the Pollinator Pathway can mark their properties on the map. Maybe we can get a speaker or create a program or brochure in conjunction with the Sustainability Committee. Alan Ponanski, a Sustainability Committee member, spoke about the Homegrown National Park, which is a national movement that helps to educate property owners on how to support local birds and insects by planting native plants, shrinking their lawns, and not raking the leaves under oak trees. Amalia meets with First Selectman Todd Gelston every month to discuss current projects. Mr. Gelston suggested combining the community calendar with the municipal calendar, and meeting quarterly with the directors of local organizations like the Historical Society, Garden Club, the Lions Club, the libraries, the churches, etc. The community calendar could be online and also posted in a specific place that is easy to access.

Mr. Sina said that is a lot to read, and suggested having something to look at, perhaps at a Community Garden day, to show people what is possible and what it could look like. The Commission would like to involve the open spaces, maybe with a scavenger hunt or something similar. Ms. Shaltiel said that they are using the local newspaper to promote sustainability and are always looking for articles on conservation and sustainability (350 words).

6. Chair's Updates

- Mr. Sina submitted an article, "Reminder for Hikers," to the East Haddam News with safety information regarding local wildlife and circulated the most recent information on CT Trails.
- Last time we voted to increase the number of people on the commission. Todd explained why that is not a good idea, because it makes it harder to get a quorum. First we need to identify a few people who are committed to attending the meetings. Joe proposes that we table the idea, maybe approach some people at the Sportsman's Club. We need to go to a town meeting to change the number. Amalia said they had 10 members and reduced it to 6 and some alternates and it's easier to get a quorum.
- The terms of Mr. Sina, Mr. Beard, Mr. Bernard, and Mr. Olin, are up for renewal for two years and have been recommended to the Board of Selectmen for renewal as of July 1.
- Mr. Capel and Mr. Gillis may decide how to remove some dead trees. Mr. Capel has completed the chainsaw training.
- Mr. Sina referred to Mr. Beard who reported that we are considering applying for a Resilient Forest Management Grant from DEEP which is now available for municipalities. We had a forester out to look at the Shugrue Reserve, and he (David Irwin) will provide assistance in applying for the grant. The application window opens next month. We need to find out how much our desired plan will cost, since the maximum grant is $150,000.

7. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Updates

i. Stewardship and Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis
Pat and Bernie took care of a number of downed trees on a number of trails. There still is a lot to do. New map box and maps at Hatch; picked up Gelston map in Essex and mounted on kiosk

ii. Outreach and Promotion – Mr. Sina
Sent article to paper on interacting with critters on the trail. Alan is going to resubmit the article on the homegrown national park

iii Climate Resilience– Mr. Olin
It is an ongoing battle to prepare for flooding. The Grant for the flood plain did not get funded. The plan was to bring in people from UConn and Cornell to inventory the flood plain in the village and to suggest flood prevention measures, nature-based adaptations, using berms or boardwalks. We continue to be in touch on the DEEP grant around the CIRCA study that was completed in June last year. Removal of the rehearsal hall and opening up a channel there is on the table potentially, but Goodspeed has been very slow in responding.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls no update

ii. P & Z Updates – Mr. Gillis
Discussion around the firehouse demo and rebuilding

iii. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina
Once the budget is passed, Jim Ventres says the Sprecher swap and Urban Farm will come up at a Town Meeting as soon as Linda can schedule it.

iv. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard
No report

v. Sustainability Committee– Mr. Ponanski
Repair cafe had more people than last time. There was a discussion with the Sustainability Committee about cosponsoring events and working together. There was a presentation of Doug Tallamy's "Homegrown National Park" on April 18 at 7pm at the Senior Center as part of the town's Earth Day Week (April 17-26). The Homegrown National Park initiative shows people how to improve their own yard habitat by planting native species, reducing lawns, putting up bird and bat houses, creating rain gardens, reducing outdoor lighting, etc. There was also a town-wide cleanup and other events.

c. Reserve Monitor Discussion– Mr. Sina
None

8. New Business (b)
   a. New Bills
   Lumber from March and April, some oil 147.51
   Motion to approve the bill as presented
   Beard/Bernard – Passed Unanimously.

   b. Discussion from Commission members
   Joe is moving to Ohio sometime this year and has asked Bernie to co-chair with him until he leaves. Bernie will work with Joe to preserve the institutional knowledge.
   Motion to appoint Bernie to be a co-chair
   Ponanski/Olin – Passed unanimously

   c. Amalia – Bernie and John won the prize for the best articles found in the town wide pick up – a bunch of women's shoes, singles, no pairs

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

10. **Next Meeting:** Tuesday, 02 June 2026, 7:00 PM, Meeting Room #1

11. **Adjournment**
Motion to adjourn at 8:25 PM
Bernard/Capel– Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Martha Hansen
Recording Secretary