



Tuesday, August 6, 2024
Municipal Office Building Room #1

1. Call to order – Called to order at 7:00 p.m.
In attendance: Joe Sina, Bernie Gillis, Cameron Beard, Alan Ponanski, Barry Bernard, Gary Wilson, David Walls (Zoom), and Rob Smith.

Absent: John Olin, Susan Pagnano, and David Walls.
2. Alternate appointments (if necessary)-Mr. Bernard and Mr. Ponanski were appointed.
3. Approval of agenda
Motion to approve the agenda.
Wilson/Bernard Passed Unanimously
4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes July 2, 2024
Motion to approve the meeting minutes.
Bernard/Beard Passed
5. General announcements
 - A concerned citizen from Powerhouse Road reported the presence of the “Tree of Heaven” an invasive species. Mr. Sina outlined the potential control measures, including physical removal and herbicide application, as the tree can contribute to the spread of the spotted lanternfly.
 - Mr. Sina proposed reducing printed map distribution at less-trafficked preserves, suggesting using QR codes instead. Specific preserves identified for the initiative included Lord Wellington, Davison, Urbanik and Gelston. The Commission discussed the potential implementation and impact on visitors.
6. Presentations from the public
 - A resident would like to donate a granite bench in memory of her husband. The bench would be placed at a spot along the orange trail at Chapal Farm, where she and her husband spent time overlooking the river. The bench would have no plaque and is intended solely as a memorial. The bench was previously approved by the Commission under the previous Chair, Marilyn Gleeson, but the installation was delayed. The donor is willing to handle the installation with help from her family. The Commission members

supported the installation, reaffirming the previous approval. They agreed to assist the donor as needed and suggested reaching out to Public Works for additional help if necessary.

- Rob Smith raised issues about the town's tree removal practices, highlighting that nearly 400 mature and healthy trees are marked for removal. He questioned the criteria and potential conflict of interest, as the same company marks and removes the trees. He emphasized the environmental impacts, such as loss of shade, increased erosion, and habitat removal, and urged the Conservation Commission to take action.
- The Commission acknowledged the validity of the concerns but also acknowledged that its sphere of activity generally doesn't extend to the trees along the public right-of-way. Nevertheless, it expressed support for an independent tree committee, not under the auspices of the Conservation Commission, to work with the tree warden and establish a formal policy for roadside tree management. There was further discussion at the end of the meeting.

7. Old business

a. Subcommittee updates

i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis

- Bog bridges at Lord Wellington Preserve were dislodged due to heavy rain and have been repositioned, but they will need to be pinned down with rebar to prevent future movement. Weed whacking was completed on several trails, including Roaring Brook and Patrell, to maintain accessibility.

ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Wilson via email

- An article on oak trees' environmental benefits was published in the East Haddam News.
- Mr. Wilson will provide a spreadsheet of the titles of all the articles prepared for the EH weekly news and quarterly Events magazine since 2020.

iii. Climate Resilience –Mr. Olin-email read by Mr. Sina

- The Succor Brook flood study group will have a table at the EH Land Trust Music on the River event on August 12th. Representatives from the state (CIRCA) and the engineering firm doing the survey (Kleinfelder) will be there. The Public Workshop on the study will be held during the week of September 9th at the Municipal Office. An article on the study will be published in the Events Magazine.

b. Liaison Reports

i. IWWC Updates-Mr. Walls: No updates.

ii. P&Z updates – Mr. Gillis: No updates.

iii. Open Space updates-Mr. Sina: No updates.

iv. Eightmile Committee updates – Mr. Beard

- They are preparing to assist with the maintenance of the Goodwin Trail in East Lyme, where some areas are washed out and need repairs.

v. Sustainability Committee- Mr. Ponanski

- Mr. Ponanski reported on a recent gathering at RiverCOG in Essex. The Sustainability Committee is continuing to fine-tune its initiatives, and there will be a presentation on energy audits at the Senior Center next week. The event will discuss how residents can participate in energy audits, potentially at no cost.

c. Planting/existing garden updates – Mr. Wilson via email.

- Mr. Wilson applied soluble fertilizer to the viburnum at the community garden and noted that the plants are doing well, additional straw was used as mulch to retain moisture and reduce the need for frequent watering.
- The kiosk at Lena was trimmed, and four swamp white oaks were planted near the parking lot. Two of these trees were disturbed by wildlife, so protective fencing was installed to prevent further damage.
- Mr. Wilson also planted three swamp white oaks at the Hatch parking lot after the area was cleared of invasives. These were protected when planted by fencing.
- At Patrell, 3 Joe Pie weed plants were installed.
- All plants installed this year have been watered as needed when they lacked sufficient rainfall, including apple trees at SRO, high bush cranberries and walnuts at the CG, oaks at Lena and Hatch, and buttonbush and Joe Pie weed at Patrell.

d. Reserve Monitor Discussion –Mr. Sina

- Mr. Sina suggested postponing the reserve monitoring activities until the cooler fall weather. He acknowledged that many monitors, including himself, have delayed these tasks due to the high summer heat and bugs. He will follow up with each monitor individually to ensure the work is completed in the fall.

8. New Business

a. New bills

Motion to approve the bill(s) as presented:

- Shagbark Lumber dated 7/20/24 for \$16.08.
- Gary Wilson for supplies for \$69.98.
- Gary Wilson for supplies for \$157.49

Gillis/Ponanski Passed unanimously

b. Discussion from Commission members

Municipal budget for Open Space tree work - Mr. Beard

Mr. Beard raised the issue of increasing workload related to tree maintenance along trails and suggested the need for a municipal budget to hire a crew to handle this work. The Commission discussed the importance of planning for this as open space and trail miles continue to expand

Role of CC in Forestry Management

Mr. Beard reiterated the importance of the Conservation Commission's role in managing forests within the town's open spaces. He suggested that the Commission develop more comprehensive forest management plans for these areas. The idea of bringing in an arborist to assess certain properties and explore the potential for selective harvesting was also discussed.

9. Public Comment (can be sent via email to: ccchair@easthaddam.org) -There was none.

10. Next meeting: Tues. 03 September 2024 7:00 pm, Room #1

11. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

Beard/Ponanski Passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary