



## **Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Tuesday, July 1, 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, John Olin, and Gary Wilson.

**Members Absent:** David Walls, Cameron Beard, Alan Ponanski, and Susan Pagnano.

**Guests:**

**Alternate Appointments:**

### **3. Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda as presented.

**Bernard/Wilson – Passed Unanimously.**

### **4. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes from June 3, 2025**

Motion to approve the June 3, 2025, minutes as presented.

**Gillis/Sina – Passed Unanimously.**

### **5. Chair's Updates**

Mr. Wilson is now an alternate member. Ms. Zemienieski will be contacted for an update on reconfirming members' two-year terms. QR codes have been created for six additional reserves, with seven remaining. No feedback has been received yet regarding the QR codes. New large orange hunting signs stating "Hunting is permitted during hunting season" have been completed and are stored; 22 signs are available for kiosk placement to improve visibility.

### **6. Old Business**

## **a. Subcommittee Updates**

### **i. Stewardship & Forestry Management – Mr. Gillis**

Mr. Gillis reported that at Salmon River Overlook, mowing was done around the trees, and the town mowed the field recently, though it is unclear if that will be done regularly due to staffing limits. Mowing depends on availability and equipment, so some areas like Harris may need to be maintained independently.

Weed whacking at Roaring Brook across the power lines was attempted but halted due to running out of string. Herbicide appears to have been used previously in that area, killing many trees.

Trail work included rerouting and marking the white trail at Hatch to avoid muddy sections. A potential trail connection at Kronberg to North Musk Road is not viable due to terrain. An access point from Clark Gates is being discussed. Trees were cleared or reported on trails at Sabine, Lena, Lord Wellington, Harris, and Roaring Brook.

A work crew helped build platforms at Golet for handicapped access. Decking is complete.

At Hatch, there was discussion about clearing the three-acre hilltop area. A heavy-duty brush hog could be hired to mow the full area for \$2,000, but consensus was to clear only near the picnic table and benches and let the rest return to meadow. The focus is on maintaining a view from the chairs, which currently offers a clear view of the river and Long Island Sound. Additional clearing may happen if views become obstructed again. For now, the plan is to maintain only key areas and let nature take its course.

### **ii. Outreach & Promotion – Mr. Wilson**

Mr. Wilson announced his resignation from the commission, making this his final official meeting. As a result, a new person will be needed to manage Outreach & Promotion. He has been managing this and provided a list of past articles, including recent submissions on vernal pools, monarchs, and Hatch. These have been sent to *East Haddam News* and *Events Magazine* but have not yet been published. He offered to pass on his materials electronically.

The commission agreed that continuing to submit articles to *Events Magazine* quarterly is valuable, especially to raise awareness about local preserves and trails. While some articles highlight specific properties, others share general environmental, or wildlife topics based on personal interests.

### **iii. Climate Resilience – Mr. Olin**

The consultants for CIRCA have completed their final report identifying two key mitigation options: relocating the Goodspeed rehearsal hall and widening the bridge on Creamery Road. A recent meeting with the town, Goodspeed leadership, and the state discussed these options. The town may pursue funding for the bridge project, estimated at around \$1 million.

Goodspeed is exploring the Chevy building as a future rehearsal space, but this could take up to 10 years to realize due to fundraising needs. Meanwhile, the consultants want to begin the design phase for the flood channel where the rehearsal hall currently stands, but Goodspeed is not prepared to commit to removing the building yet.

The town is being asked to help fund the design phase (with an estimated 20% match), though Goodspeed has not committed to participating financially. The town's immediate concerns include the actor housing, Norwich Road, and especially the sewage treatment plant, which could be raised three feet for protection.

Other long-term ideas—like water retention upstream or rerouting water to the Connecticut River—were mentioned but face major logistical and environmental obstacles.

The most realistic short-term priorities are funding improvements to Creamery Road and safeguarding critical infrastructure, especially the sewer system.

## **b. Liaison Reports**

### **i. IWWC Updates – Mr. Walls**

Nothing new to report.

### **ii. P&Z Updates – Mr. Gillis**

The draft of the Moodus Redevelopment Plan has been completed by the consultants at SLR. A public meeting will be held at the Municipal Office, like the previous session, to gather feedback. The draft includes road reconfiguration (including Route 149), traffic calming, a proposed rotary at the town center, and improved access to the Moodus River. Of particular interest is a potential hiking trail along the river connecting to the Grist Mill and the Gary Bogan property. The public presentation is expected to coincide with the upcoming budget vote and will feature visual displays of the proposed ideas. Everyone is encouraged to attend and share input.

### **iii. Open Space Updates – Mr. Sina**

The maps for the Sprecker property are complete and will be presented at a future town meeting for approval after the budget vote. While the town does not officially own the land yet, all necessary steps are in place. There is a fence on private property for the bull, and maintaining it is not the town's responsibility. There is potential to eventually connect this land to other open spaces like Harris, though that is a long-term goal. The Kronberg property is owned by the town, but final paperwork and reimbursements from the state are still pending. Additionally, a couple of other properties are under consideration, with the committee funding assessments to determine their value for future connectivity. Some potential acquisitions would require investment in infrastructure such as boardwalks and bridges, which depend on securing grants. Overall, there is a long-term vision to acquire and connect properties as opportunities and funding arise.

### **iv. Eightmile Committee Updates – Mr. Beard**

Mr. Gillis reported that they have completed the National Park Service unit Unigridd map, a two-year project. Copies of the maps will be mailed to residents across the three towns and are also available at the Municipal Office and in libraries. Unigridd maps are commonly found in national parks. He also reminded everyone to keep October's Riverfest on their calendars.

### **v. Sustainability Committee – Mr. Ponanski**

Mr. Sina explained that Tanya Bourgoin sent an email asking if the commission would help sponsor or co-sponsor a resolution to protect pollinators. Mr. Olin explained they were currently compiling the final application for the town's Sustainable CT Gold certification, which may include pollinator efforts as part of the criteria.

The town could earn points for a townwide resolution protecting pollinators, but it is unclear how these fit into the town's plan of conservation and development. Much of the work—like pollinator gardens and planting trees and flowering shrubs—has already been done by the commission and the Land Trust.

### **c. Planting/Existing Garden Updates – Mr. Wilson**

Plantings at Petrall Hatch and Salmon River Overlook are healthy and were recently weeded, with another mowing and/or weeding needed. About a dozen cranberry viburnum plants remain at the community garden and half a dozen white swamp oaks are in pots at home; all should be planted by fall to avoid root issues. The viburnum may be suitable for Hatch, while the oaks need wetter soil. Potted plants in the garden are set into the ground in the same plot as last year, about five in from the gate. A push mower may be donated for use at the community garden to help

maintain paths, especially while school is out and VOAG students are unavailable. If usable, it would be stored under a tarp on site.

#### **d. Reserve Monitor Discussion – Mr. Sina**

Three reserve monitors have stepped down. Coverage for Harris and Nichols has been reassigned, and Dean will be jointly covered by two volunteers. One has also offered to clear the path up to Hatch. The only property currently lacking coverage is Rose Farm, but a volunteer has now stepped up to monitor it, as they frequent the area and already observe trail conditions. A recent trail maintenance report indicated that briars on the lower red trail at the Gelston Easement were trimmed as part of a school project, but the upper red trail still needs work and will be addressed soon. A short bog bridge at Harris is intact, but a nearby area is muddy and may benefit from additional boards for safer access.

### **7. New Business**

#### **a. New Bills**

The following bill(s) were submitted and reviewed:

\$622.82 for hunting signs.

\$80.90 for signs at Dean property.

**Motion** to approve the bill(s)

**Gillis/Bernard – Passed Unanimously.**

#### **b. Discussion from Commission Members**

There was confusion about a missing bill from Essex Design, which was sent but not received. Essex Printing, a separate company, oversaw the QR code signage and lamination. Maps and QR codes have been distributed to most locations, though Rose Farm still needs some. Members confirmed that revised maps are available, and anyone who needs additional copies should contact the map coordinator.

Mr. Wilson announced plans to retire from the commission but will remain active with planting and Patrell work. A potential new member will be invited to the next meeting to introduce themselves. Pending approval by the Conservation Commission, the application will go to the Board of Selectman. The meeting closed with a note of appreciation for Mr. Wilson's many years of dedication, passion for conservation, and lasting contributions to the commission's efforts.

### **8. Public Comment**

No public comments were received via email or in person.

### **9. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 5, 2025, at 7:00 PM in Room #1.

**10. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn at 8:13 PM.

**Gillis/Wilson – Passed Unanimously.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

E. Ruth Ziobron

Recording Secretary