

**East Haddam
Conservation Commission**

January 14, 2010
Adopted February 2, 2010

1. Call to Order

The Special Meeting of the East Haddam Conservation Commission was held on Thursday, January 14, 2010, at 7:02 PM at the River House. Cynthia Matthew being in the Chair and the Secretary being Present.

a. Roll Call

Cynthia Matthew, Paul Stuhlman, Peggy Carlson, TJ Tarbox, Nancy Mackinnon, Todd Gelston and Pat Thomas. Others present: Scot Mackinnon.

2. Approval of Agenda

P. Harris is P. Thomas on iv. School Program
Pant should be Plant and Bird under vi.

Motion by Mr. Tarbox to approve the agenda as modified. Second by Mr. Stuhlman and unanimously approved.

3. Approval of Minutes for 12/01/10

Under New Business, section a. second to last sentence has had its syntax corrected.
Mr. Mackinnon noted that their name does not have a capital K in it.
Other discussion section: added town when referencing the attorney and changed board to broad.

Motion by Ms. Carlson to approve the minutes as amended. Second by Mr. Stuhlman and unanimously approved.

4. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Updates:

i. Forest Management – T Gelston

Mr. Gelston noted an editorial in the Hartford Courant regarding forest loss over the past 20 years. Core forests are just as vital to water quality as wetlands. The article noted several points in preserving forest space that match what the CC is doing. There are several factors that go into preserving rural character that are beyond just preserving space.

England is a good model for what the subcommittee would like to do. The subcommittee is thinking of what summer activities can be done this coming summer. Mr. Gelston is hoping to hire a forestry student and is hoping to pick the top three parcels for the inventory. Mr. Gelston noted that help is needed. Six letters went out to forestry school. Mr. Gelston received the job description from Mr. Worthley. Mr. Mackinnon noted that Unity school in Maine should also receive a letter.

Mr. Gelston walked the Valenti property to see the potential cord wood opportunity. There is a tremendous opportunity to get harvest downed red wood and others. Mr. Gelston asked his firewood supplier if he would be interested in purchasing the downed wood. Mr. Gelston is going to meet with the subcommittee to make a

recommendation. There are some positives that come from doing this – the wood is cleaned up and used for a useful purpose and the town gets some funds for the wood. Mr. Mackinnon asked how much is too much wood harvested from a property – is there a working formula for that? Mr. Gelston indicated that it is a very technical question and depends upon a soil content, species that is there and what species one wants to be there. The sustainable forester cuts trees that are mature to be cut, leaves seed trees and picks up trash which become weeds and then cause an issue with seedling growth.

Ms. Matthew asked Mr. Gelston if the suggested monies should be used for budgetary requests. Mr. Gelston noted that the subject has not been discussed but it is a good number to start with. Mr. Gelston noted that there will be another subcommittee meeting and then a recommendation will be made for the cord wood on the Valenti property.

Ms. Mackinnon made a suggestion that pictures should be taken of the logging as evidence of the poor job that was done. This can be used to highlight what is not acceptable for future logging operations.

ii. Boundary Marking – TJ Tarbox

Mr. Tarbox noted the Eagle Scout project on the Urbanik property is completed. A few more trail markers need to be added to clearly demarcate the path. There is a map that will be posted to show the trails. Mr. Tarbox will write a letter from the CC noting that the project is complete, and the Eagle Scout did an excellent job.

Also on the Urbanik property, Mr. Tarbox noted previously there were trees that may fall into the lake. Both the steward and Mr. Ventres indicated the lake needed to freeze first, and once that occurred, the steward took down 8 trees that were over the lake.

Mr. Ventres noted the town will cut up the wood and place it at the Rotary Park near Miller's Pond.

For the Valenti property, it is called the Rose Farm Homestead and 1 sign will be created and posted. Boundaries have not been marked but have been determined. Mr. Ventres has found a volunteer to mark that property as well as the Winterbrook property. Mr. Tarbox will coordinate the marking.

For the Pizzini properties, there are two signs that will be created and posted. Ms. Matthew asked if the Pizzini property should be called "EMR – Pizzini tract" similar to the Patrell property and requested that Mr. Tarbox check on how properties should be named before creating the signs. Mr. Tarbox will also get signs made for Winterbrook as its boundaries are marked.

iii. Community Outreach – P Stuhlman

Mr. Stuhlman noted that the first topic broached was "How do we help fellow citizens appreciate the open space and forestlands we have, and is there anyway that we could find any groups that are interested in helping out?" As Ms. Thomas is now part of the CC, she has a direct connection with the schools, which is one area of interest. At that end of this meeting, Mr. Stuhlman would like to brainstorm with the members to see how to get further connections with townspeople.

Mr. Gelston also noted that young families are interested in walking the local trails and getting involved.

Ms. Matthew indicated that the Events Magazine could be used to highlight that trail books are available. An open invitation could be issued to the townspeople around how visiting one of the properties would be a great way to spend a weekend.

iv. School Program – P. Thomas

Ms. Thomas met with the Vo-ag teachers at Nathan Hale-Ray High School. They are interested in writing a grant to work on similar types of activities that the CC works on. Ms. Thomas provided the grant application. The best property for school interaction and project is the Nichols property given that it is near the school. Students could be bussed to the property and back within 80 minutes. Grant parameters include no permanent buildings can be built, activity must be partnered with adults within the community, and there can be no hand-outs. The students can buy tools and already have quite a bit of equipment as well as are very excited to be involved. Kayaking, boating, testing water, testing soil, etc. are all things being considered. The Nichols property needs support to steward its management.

The teachers need specifics for the grant and are interested in a long-term commitment. Ms. Mackinnon noted that it would be helpful to make suggestions as to what needs to be done and why. The teachers' interest falls in line with the activities needed by the CC: signage, website for self-tours, trail management and development, offering activities to attract the public in general (letterboxing, geo-caching, recordings for self-directed tours), and periodic inventories. They would also like to use the property for outdoor education classes and would offer an opportunity to teach how to use the GPS system.

Next steps are for Ms. Matthew to write the teachers with a letter denoting the CC's interest in being connected to this initiative. Mr. Gelston noted that the CC would need a formal plan from the teachers of what would be done. The top priorities would be plant and bird inventory, creation of a management plan and marking trails. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy provides demonstrations of trail markings and may be a good group to provide a demonstration for the students.

Ms. Matthew offered to contribute sections on the CC within the grant application.

Mr. Mackinnon asked about the appropriate protocol for conducting a wilderness class within town-owned space. Ms. Matthew denoted that that falls under the CC's auspices.

Ms. Matthew also noted to Ms. Thomas that if there were a student more interested in developing a CC website; that would be a great idea for a project as well.

v. Prioritization – C Matthew

Ms. Matthew has the spreadsheet well set out with everyone's input. She expects to have data to populate the spreadsheet shortly. Ms. Mackinnon offered to assist Ms. Matthew with the effort. The Recording Secretary is also available to help with the effort.

vi. Plant and Bird Inventory – P Carlson and N MacKinnon

The CT Botanical Society has agreed to help do a plant inventory on the EMR - Patrell property on May 1, 2010. Ms. Mackinnon is looking for volunteers for a winter bird inventory, and will attend the 1/15 EHLT annual meeting to discuss the project.

The EHLT invited a state geologist to come and explore the Patrell property previously. Ms. Mackinnon is hoping that he can provide some written information on the property which can be used for the inventory.

Mr. Stuhlman had sent a copy of the DEP website information, and Ms. Matthew indicated that the site held some mappings where one could see geologic information within the town.

b. Other pending issues

There is no further update on the Jezek and Sabine properties with the private landowner easement to allow for a trail to connect the two properties. Mr. Tarbox asked that Ms. Matthew follow up with Mr. Lyman to get this issue resolved.

5. New Business

a. 2010/2011 budget discussion – C Matthew

Ms. Matthew asked each subcommittee to think about what resources would be needed to help make progress over the coming year and provide that input to her for inclusion in the budget. Mr. Stuhlman noted that the Board of Finance will need to be made aware of why the CC is requesting the additional monies. March begins budget season so budget numbers must be provided by the next meeting. Ms. Matthew will ask that Mr. Lyman attend the next meeting to provide input on the budget and process.

b. Plan of Conservation and Development status check

Ms. Matthew did not get to the Town Office to pick up copies. She asked everyone to stop by and pick up their copy. There is a meeting on it after the next CC meeting. Ms. Thomas provided a copy of the page and will provide it to the CC. February 23, 2010, is the meeting to review the document.

6. Confirmation of next Regular meeting: February 2, 2010, at 7:00pm at The River House

7. Other discussion

Ms. Matthew warmly welcomed Pat Thomas to the CC.

Mr. Stuhlman noted that he is continuing to reach out to the senior community. He also suggested the CC consider holding an event the first Saturday after the end of school as a way to involve the community further in appreciating our forests. It would be specifically focused on young families while still open to the whole town. Mr. Gelston noted that a second idea is to host an activity on the first warm weekend in April as well. Ms. Mackinnon suggested hosting an activity at the Grange during the winter. Mr. Stuhlman asked Ms. Thomas to discuss the ideas with the teachers and see if they have any ideas that might draw young families. Mr. Stuhlman also noted that the event would need to be advertised through the school. Mr. Gelston indicated starting simple was the best approach.

Ms. Matthew asked that Mr. Tarbox consider hosting a hike on the Urbanik property to showcase the property.

EHLT held a very well-attended hike on the Babcock Wildlife Management property on 1/1 and highlighted several features of the land.

The Roundtable will be held on Saturday, January 16, starting at 9am.

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Ms. Mackinnon brought up the discussion around abandoned roads. There are miles of these within town, and this is an issue that the CC might want to review, research and provide input to P&Z about removing abandoned roads from developable properties. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Stuhlman to adjourn, second by Ms. Mackinnon, unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 8:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon A. Hawkins
Recording Secretary

Attachments:

- Article "Connecticut forest-land forum looks at state's wooded assets"
- 2010-2011 Living to Serve Chapter Grant Application
- Article "Core Forests Being Lost"
- The Habitat, Fall 2009, Volume 21, Number 4