

**East Haddam
Conservation Commission**

October 7, 2014

Adopted November 4, 2014

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the East Haddam Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, October 7, 2014, at 7:34 PM at the River House. The Chairperson being in the Chair and the Secretary being Present.

a. Roll Call

Rob Smith, Marilyn Gleeson, Peggy Carlson, Paul Sienna, Sue Merrow, Charlotte Gelston, Todd Gelston. Others in attendance: FFA Members - Heidi Pease, Jenna Sullivan (Secretary), Mary Pease (Treasurer), Brianna Pach (President), and Sara Weekes (Vice President) – departed 8:24, Haddam Boy Scouts Troop 44: Thomas Buhl, Eagle Scout Candidate and Paul Buhl– departed 7:53.

2. Approval of Agenda

The Scouts proposal will proceed first, followed by the FFA presentation.

Motion by Ms. Merrow to approve the agenda as presented. Second by Mr. Gelston and unanimously approved.

3. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes for 9/9/14

Changed D'Addio to D'Addeo (page 1)

Changed Stuhman to Stuhlman (page 1)

Removed 'the information' from last sentence in paragraph immediately above item #8 (page 4)

Motion by Ms. Merrow to approve the minutes as amended. Second by Mr. Gelston and unanimously approved.

4. Old Business

a. Subcommittee updates

Mr. Smith ran into Trish Damuck who explained she took the Eagle Scout outhouse plans to Liz Davidson. Ms. Davidson had questions about the outhouse needing approval. Mr. Smith then went to Mr. Ventres and got it cleared up. Because Hatch is an approved building lot, we are fine and it will be signed off. There are rules that it can't be within 3 ft of ledge, etc., and there were also questions about who will take care of it. Mr. Ventres should have run this by Ms. Davidson instead of telling the EHCC that it was OK to proceed and that no approvals were needed, but it is all worked out now so the project can move forward.

Forestry & Stewardship – Mr. Gelston noted the team has done a lot of work. The two bridges on Hatch are completed and look fantastic – the CC needs to take photos! We have also started to install the parking lot although more work is needed there. The rain set us back a bit. We have enough work to keep us busy thru March 2015. Mr. Gelston needs to redo the timeline. We hope to get to other properties soon. Last year we worked until 12/7 and then could not start again until 3/23. We need to be mindful to tell neighbors what we are doing so no one gets upset. Mr. Gelston will let Bob Fiala know about the Boy Scout project as he

seems to be the focal point for that neighborhood. Mr. Smith talked to Mark Walter about 4 trees that need to come down near the parking lot entrance. Mr. Walters said that if he marks the trees, he will have someone remove them.

Volunteer Activism – Nothing to report on the potential Lyme Boy Scout project. Waiting for another meeting to be scheduled by Mr. Gelston, to which he can invite them to attend.

Outreach and Promotions – The 4 sandwich boards will be used to advertise the Riverfest on 10/18 at Devil's Hopyard. They will be placed in front of The Grange, in Moodus Center, near the Bridge and by the Transfer Station.

b. IWWC and P&Z updates

IWWC – Mr. Gelston reported that there was nothing major that was discussed. He did mention he noticed the Shagbark conservation easement wasn't in the IWWC minutes, and it didn't come up. In other matters, there is concern about people seeking approval of changes because of the drawdown of Bashan Lake. Many residents want to put up concrete walls.

Also, the landscape plan for Sen. Dodd's wife's house was approved.

The plans for the boat dock that have been in the works for 5 years has all approvals needed. It would be for public use and would be south of the Goodspeed parking lot. The town received a grant for it. It is planned to only be 20 feet long.

Mr. Casner was at the IWWC meeting talking about his 'property' on AP Gates/Warner. and said there is no vernal pool there but there is one.

P&Z – Ms. Gleeson reported the P&Z Commission is reviewing the Gateway Commission standards. They are considering recommending some changes such as changing the maximums for land coverage to the same percentage for everyone, regardless of lot size. It currently requires a sliding scale of lot size grouping to have a set percentage and there was the feeling that this was unfair. Another suggestion was to have the measurement of the height of a residence changed from the lowest grade to the average grade. Mr. Gelston explained that both of these suggestions will result in the ability to build larger homes, which is counter to what the Gateway standards are based on. He might attend the next P&Z meeting on 10/14.

There was some discussion about the issue with Mr. Casner's purchase of a piece of property over 10 years ago near the corner of AP Gates and Warner. Mr. Ventres reported that Attorney Wilson's opinion was that any land that is open space needs to have open space's permission to build on it.

The Cameron Family Farm is looking to lease or buy the Shadybrook property. There is the possibility of 50k chicks hatched and shipped per week.

There was also concern about people wanting to build concrete walls around Bashan Lake.

Mr. Thomas suggested that someone video what the lake side looks like now so they can easily see if there were changes made that were not approved. Mr. Ventres said that he planned to visit there frequently.

c. Update on open space purchases

Mr. Smith reported there is no news on the grant. He is hoping to hear something within the next 2 weeks. The good news is that, with the exception of the Dean property, the paperwork for Hatch, Zeiller and Harris is finalized so they should be compensated soon. The Dean paperwork is up in the air because of antiquated language the Attorney General's Office wants around working farms.

d. Linear Trail update

Mr. Smith reported the Eight Mile Rive group and the EHLT did not get the grant for the bridge and he has no idea why. The Eight Mile Wild and Scenic Rivers group is managed by the National Parks Service and most groups of this type are within National Parks or managed by them. The Eight Mile River group is different, under a sort of quasi-government agency that works under National Park guidelines. They will now have to look for other matching monies. Mr. Smith hopes the Eight Mile River Group will contribute some as well as the EHLT and the Lyme Land Trust. They also might ask local organizations to contribute. Trails grants are at the top of the list for the State but they want additional studies, such as historical archeological studies of the trail lands. Regardless, East Haddam will get our section done. East Lyme has put in for a grant. There will be a need to ensure parking will not infringe on endangered species. Hopefully there can be an official opening of the Richard H. Goodwin Trail in the Spring.

e. Trowbridge Road property discussion

Mr. Smith had nothing new to report.

5. New Business

a. New bills

Mr. Smith noted the receipt of a Shagbark bill for \$316.16 to be paid out of the 2014/2015 budget.

Motion by Mr. Gelston to pay the Shagbark bill, seconded by Ms. Gelston and unanimously approved.

Mr. Smith noted the receipt of a DH Marvin bill for rental of a bulldozer, transport, and fuel totaling \$415.60. We prepaid \$816 on the credit card last year to DH Marvin so there is a need to determine the actual balance due.

Motion by Ms. Merrow to pay the DH Marvin bill, seconded by Ms. Gelston and unanimously approved.

Mr. Smith asked if we have already been members of the Connecticut Association of Conservation & Inland Wetland Commission and if we want to continue to do so. We agreed that we should go for the Sustaining membership for \$75.

Motion to approve payment to the CACIWC by Ms. Carlson. Seconded by Ms. Merrow and unanimously approved.

Mr. Smith asked if we wanted to renew our membership in the Connecticut Land Conservation Council. The Sponsoring Membership level is \$250. Everyone agreed we should do this.

Motion to approve payment to the Connecticut Land Conservation Council Environmental Council membership by Mr. Gelston. Seconded by Ms. Merrow and unanimously approved.

b. New Eagle Scout Project

Thomas Buhl from Troop 44 in Haddam, who is a resident of East Haddam, presented his proposal for an Eagle Scout project on the Sabine property on the old log road down Daniel Peck Rd. He would like to build a trail thru the woods road where there is a stream that would need a 3 ft bridge. His plan is to go around the hills and go through an opening in the stone wall and follow the shoreline. He would need to put in another 3 ft bridge to cross a pool and then the trail would meet up with Daniel Peck Rd. Trail would be about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. The walk back out, which is on a dirt road, to the trail head would make it a total of one mile. Mr. Smith noted that the part that goes up to the Jezek preserve could get an easement. Mr. Buhl said that he could start the work in November after the leaves fall. With permission, he would put any dead wood on the side and would paint the trees to mark the trail. As with all Eagle Scout projects, he would have other troop members help out. Mr. Gelston asked if there would be room for parking. Mr. Buhl thought about 8 cars could park at the cul de sac. Mr. Gelston also asked if he would consider changing the trail so that it included the hill since most people enjoy getting in a view when they hike. Mr. Buhl agreed that he could do that and confirmed that the hill was not steep. Mr. Smith asked if there was a need for Inlands/Wetlands approval, but Mr. Buhl said that Mr. Ventres said as the bridges are only going to be 3 feet, no approval would be necessary. Mr. Sienna asked if the height of the bridges would be high enough because of the chance for higher water than what we have seen this year.

Mr. Smith liked the overall concept. He did say that he would prefer that, for the northern boundary, the trail be farther from that boundary so that there is less chance that hikers infringe on private property. He also suggested they walk the proposed trail together and set a date for Sunday, 10/12 at 1PM, to do that. Final determination will be made after this walkthru. The CC also committed to helping with funding for the bridges provided the scouts attempt some fund raising. Mr. Buhl's father stated that he had some lumber that might be enough to make both bridges.

c. Participation in Riverfest

The 2014 Riverfest is scheduled for Saturday, 10/18 at Devil's Hopyard. Ms. Carlson and Ms. Gleeson volunteered to participate. We need some trail guides so Ms. Gelston said she will try to gather some up. The EHCC table will be next to the EHLT table. Mr. Smith has some color maps and will ask Mr. Ventres to create a new map showing all the open space in East Haddam. Ms. Gleeson will check and purchase a three-fold out display board. We will need some color pictures of the properties for our display, and it would be good to have work party pictures as well. Mr. Sienna volunteered to have his daughter take some pictures with her nifty camera. Ms. Gleeson will bring cookies/brownies, which are needed, but there will be chowder and other food available for free as well as activities and a band.

d. FFA Presentation on Nichols Property Work

The FFA representatives provided a powerpoint presentation which they will also be presenting at their national convention this year. They have also been using this presentation at soccer games, etc. The main thrust of the presentation is a focus on their stewardship of the Nichols Property. They became stewards in 2009/2010. They successfully applied for grants in 2011 and 2012 which allowed them to create trails, purchase and install signs, build some picnic tables, bridges and stone water crossings. In addition, they have added geocaches, had

water tests done on each stream, completed a wildlife inventory and monitored the bluebird box. They also tapped the maples trees where they did not get a tremendous yield but it was enough to use for their pancake breakfast. They have currently applied for a \$6k grant to further enhance the property as they plan to maintain the trails forever and want to add a trail counter so they can determine how many people actually use the trails. The work that was done was completed through schools outdoor education and wildlife education classes. The guess is that 60% of the students participated in the work at some point.

Mr. Gelston asked if they talked to any of the neighbors around Nichols. They said that some parents of the students definitely commented favorably, and they did have a Facebook page where they got some good feedback. Mr. Gelston said he has talked to some of the Nichols neighbors who absolutely love that property and noted it is heavily used. Mr. Smith mentioned that they will likely be relocating the trailheads that go to the transfer station because there is a sign there that says it closes at 5PM, which is not true for the trails.

e. Two EHLT Board of Directors Openings

Mr. Smith announced that there are two board members are leaving at the end of their term. In addition, there may be third opening. The Board meeting once a month on Matthews Drive. Mr. Smith will send out information. Ms. Gleeson expressed possible interest.

6. Next meeting – Nov 4, 2014, 7:30, at The River House. Even though this is Election Day and we would normally not meet because of that, if we moved it out one week to Nov 11, that is Veterans Day so we can't do that day either. Everyone agreed to meet on Nov 4. Ms. Gleeson will not be able to attend.

7. Announcements and other discussion

Mr. Smith reminded everyone about the Fred Carstensen Talk and presentation, Creating Value Through Preserving and Managing Open Space, on 10/29 at the Chester Town Hall. He suggested that we try to attend since he is a very knowledgeable speaker and the topic is pertinent to what we do.

Mr. Smith said there will be an Auction for Johnsonville in the near future. Minimum bid is \$800k. Mr. Smith said that when we buy things using the credit card we need to immediately let Dawn Snow know.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Smith to adjourn at 9:52 pm, seconded by Ms. Gelston, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Gleeson for Shannon A. Goyette
Recording Secretary

Attachments:

- Large kiosk plan and cost sheets
- Small kiosk plan and cost sheets
- Fundraising handout from Griffin Shepherd
- Stewardship Work Priority and Schedule

Conservation Commission Meeting, Town of East Haddam, October 7, 2014

- Notice of Tentative Determination to Approve an Application for Dam Safety Permit and Intent to Waive Public Hearing