

**East Haddam
Conservation Commission**

February 6, 2018
Adopted March 6, 2018

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the East Haddam Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, February 6, 2018, at 7:36 PM at the River House. The Chairperson being in the Chair and the Secretary being present.

a. Roll Call

Joe Zaid, Marilyn Gleeson, Sue Merrow, Charlotte Gelston, Rob Smith, Todd Gelston. Others present: Thom Delventhal

2. Approval of Agenda

Change next meeting to March 6 with location TBD

Motion by Ms. Gleeson to approve the agenda as amended. Second by Ms. Gelston and unanimously approved.

3. Approval of Conservation Commission Minutes for 1/2/18

4d, removed “instead of purchased” and replaced with “conservation easement rather than a fee parcel”

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

4. Old Business

a. Subcommittee updates

Stewardship and Forestry Management sub-committee: Mr. Gelston announced that he would like to step down from chair of the sub-committee. He already talked with Mr. Sienna who agreed to take over as Stewardship lead. He also let the CC know that he would like to step down off the commission as well soon. The Board of Finance work is quite involved and taking much of his time.

He noted that we have over 21 miles of trails already on the properties and there’s another 21 miles of trails that still need to be completed. He indicated he is still a huge proponent of our town-owned open space and it is one of our most valuable assets.

Mr. Gelston has provided the project priority list to Mr. Sienna. He noted that Lena is in pretty good shape. Mr. Sienna will send out an email on the next work party.

Outreach and Promotion: The CC members all noted the Events magazine article was good to read. Ms. Merrow noted that any East Haddam resident that has a Colchester address receives their Events magazine 10 days to 2 weeks after the rest of the town.

Volunteer Activism: Mr. Smith and Mr. Gelston noted that more volunteers are most definitely needed.

b. IWWC and P&Z updates

IWWC – Mr. Gelston noted there was not much discussed at the meeting. The purple house looking to be shifted to dry retail/office space across from Town Tavern matter now moved to P&Z. A brand new large septic is going to be installed to support the change.

P&Z – Mr. Zaid noted the PoCD is still being reviewed. P&Z will be working with the vendor chosen to update the document. The survey will be conducted and paid for by the Board of Selectmen through the P&Z. Mr. Smith noted that the CC submission requested the survey contain the exact same questions as were asked in the last survey to ensure there is a true comparison. Mr. Smith noted that the CC's position is that the PoCD needs to be actively utilized as it is a living document and it can inform Boards and Commissions as they go about their work. Mr. Zaid also noted that from the Jan 9 meeting, there was a lot line change for a property on East Haddam Moodus Road (3 lots were combined into 1).

c. Complete Plan of Conservation and Development

Mr. Smith noted that the comments have been compiled and will be provided to the P&Z. Mr. Smith will provide a copy to the CC for their reference.

d. Banner Lodge open space update

Mr. Smith noted that nothing is happening as Mr. Ventres noted how engaged the Town Hall is in packing and moving to the new Town Office location. The topic will be revisited in a few weeks. The property would be denoted as an easement instead of outright ownership by the town. The easement is due to the owners want to maintain rights to do certain activities – hunting and cord wood harvesting. As it stands right now, the easement has not been accepted by the town. P&Z has accepted the conditions as the easement was outlined in the application for further development. The CC needed to weigh in on the property as they are the ones who need to steward the property. Right now, the CC would assume 100% of the responsibility for this property and have 0% authority. It would be quite onerous for the town to maintain and manage that easement.

e. Management plan template review

Ms. Gleeson provided the management plan that is used for the EHLT. Each property would have its own plan that is reviewed and updated at least annually. She walked through the plan. Mr. Smith would like to have the management plans completed on all properties this year. There was discussion related to how to ensure the documents are available for review and update. Google docs is an excellent tool to use for this type of work. Mr. Zaid suggested that the winter months are a good time to work on them. The CC discussed and decided to adopt a Management Plan Template similar to what the EHLT uses and will be applying it to the Town's easements and properties.

f. 2018-2019 Budget discussion

Mr. Smith defended the budget tonight. It appears that the town is approximately \$200,000 in the red given the State's budget concerns. As such, the town is looking for any place that could be cut. The discussion is focused on holding or reducing budgets. Mr. Smith noted that he cut an extra \$1000 off the map printing. The CC may also be asked to help cover the costs of printing brochures for the IBAs that the EHLT received a grant to publicize.

5. New Business

a. New bills

No new bills.

b. Potential new commissioner

Mr. Smith introduced Thom Delventhal who had submitted his application. He outlined his love of the outdoors and the connection with the land. He also has a chainsaw and is interested in stewarding the Lefebvre property. The CC discussed his application.

Motion by Ms. Gelston to recommend to the Board of Selectmen appointment of Thom Delventhal as an alternate on the CC. Second by Ms. Gleeson and unanimously approved.

Mr. Smith will submit a letter to the Board of Selectmen to request approval for Thom to officially join the CC.

c. Election of leadership

i. Chair

Mr. Smith has agreed to remain as the current Chair.

ii. Vice-Chair

Ms. Gleeson has agreed to be the Vice-Chair.

iii. Stewardship Chair

Mr. Sienna has agreed to replace Mr. Gelston as the Stewardship Chair

iv. Stewardship Vice-Chair

Mr. Zaid has agreed to be the Stewardship Vice-Chair

Motion by Ms. Merrow to nominate Rob Smith for Chair, Marilyn Gleeson for Vice-Chair, Paul Sienna for Stewardship Chair and Joe Zaid as Stewardship Vice-Chair. Second by Ms. Gleeson.

Motion by Mr. Gelston to close the nominations, hearing none. Second by Mr. Zaid.

Both motions carried unanimously.

d. Public Comment

No public attended.

6. Next meeting – March 6, at The River House.

7. Announcements and other discussion

Ms. Gleeson will provide the IBA map to Ms. Goyette who will send out to the CC.

Mr. Smith discussed the amount of money left in the budget and has talked with the State to get the reimbursement for the gravel purchased for Comer State Park.

The Open Space Commission is tentatively scheduled to look at a property on Tater Hill Road, but the walk has been postponed due to weather.

Given Mr. Gelston's impending resignation, the CC will need to determine a new representative for IWWC and Open Space. Ms. Gleeson expressed interest in becoming the IWWC representative.

Mr. Smith noted that 2 months ago, the Bond commission approved funds to purchase properties that are adjacent to current open space. There are 4 pieces totaling almost 400 acres that border Devil's Hopyard. An interesting fact is that one piece has Muddy Brook on it and that is the coldest

body of water that enters the Eightmile River. The Open Space Commission and Eightmile River Wild and Scenic have both written letters to support the purchase leveraging the additional monies from the State.

There is a new conveyance bill being considered that will fund a town-controlled open space fund, which can be used to purchase open space and farmland. It can also be used to pay off the bonding for previously purchased open space parcels. The bill allows for up to 1% of house sales over \$150,000. The town could vote to do this. Buyers pay this fee when purchasing houses. When looking at the 140 houses sold in 2017, the fee would have garnered \$149,000 in moneys for open space purchase or bond repayment. This topic is on the Board of Selectmen's agenda for discussion tomorrow.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon A. Goyette
Recording Secretary

Attachments

- Thom Delventhal application for Boards and Commissions
- East Haddam Conservation Commission Management Plan