

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT CONSERVATION
COMMISSION MEETING**

**East Haddam
Conservation Commission**

March 6, 2012

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the East Haddam Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, March 6, 2012, at 7:20 PM at the River House. Cynthia Matthew being in the Chair and the Secretary being Present.

a. Roll Call

Claire Maeder, TJ Tarbox, Cynthia Matthew, Peggy Carlson, Sue Merrow, Todd Gelston. Others present: Heidi Pease – departed 7:41, Daniel Mather – departed 7:41, Tim Lenox, Steve Somosky, Jr. (applicant)– departed 8:00, James R. Martin (applicant’s architect) – departed 8:00, Rob Smith, Emmett Lyman, Jim Ventres – departed 8:00, Charlotte Gelston.

2. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Matthew suggested the planned event be discussed first.

Motion by Ms. Merrow to approve the agenda as amended. Second by Ms. Carlson and unanimously approved.

3. Approval of Minutes for 2/14/12

Section 5. New Business under section a. “well as” added to the last sentence.

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

4. Old Business

a. Subcommittee updates:

Trail Guide – Ms. Matthew provided Ms. Pease with a box of Trail Guides. Ms. Carlson provided more money to Ms. Gelston (\$127 total). Ms. Maeder noted that there has been an amazing increase of hikers in the Haagenson Preserve on Creek Row.

Ms. Matthew also indicated that the CC may want to sell trail guides at the Nichols celebration event (see 7. CC/FFA: Celebrating our collective work at Nichols). She also suggested that perhaps a trail walk can be held after the celebration event. Mr. Smith suggested sending a trail guide to the Hartford Courant author who writes hiking articles. Mr. Tarbox will ensure that he receives the guide. Ms. Matthew asked the CC members to provide an inventory number to her so that she can determine if another printing of the guides is needed.

Timber Harvesting – No further updates to provide at this time.

b. IWWC and P&Z updates

IWWC – Mr. Gelston attended and noted that the Nichols property must be seeded per the IWWC.

P&Z – Nothing to report.

5. Advisory Discussion: Application for variance of maximum height regulations in Conservation zone at 135 Creek Row.

Ms. Matthew opened up the discussion by noting the CC's mission, which is to provide input related to its mission, and therefore discussion must be limited to the particular issue at hand, i.e., the structure exceeds the maximum height regulations as set by the Gateway Commission. Mr. Ventres noted statute requires this type of issue to be set forth before the CC and the Gateway Commission. The CC decision is an advisory letter to be provided to P&Z for them to include in their decision-making process.

Mr. Ventres read some information around the letter from the Connecticut River Gateway Commission. Mr. Lyman indicated that he is a member of the Gateway Commission and provided input as to some of the other discussion that occurred within the meeting. Mr. Tarbox noted the architect indicated the roof line was set as it is to maintain congruity of the roof lines of other properties. Mr. Martin, the architect representing Mr. Somosky, noted the slope is pretty radical; there is a drop of 30 feet. He noted that it is possible to meet the 35 foot requirements, but doing so would require additional cutting of trees, bringing in fill, etc. Mr. Lyman indicated the issue is not what someone else's viewshed is, but the view from the river and the appearance of the land. Mr. Gelston noted he served on the Gateway Commission for about 15 years previously. Building height was a matter of debate, and 35 feet was determined to be the height after much discussion over the years. He noted that while it is private property, it is a public view. The trouble with building height is that if it is increased, where does the height stop and so the line has to be drawn somewhere, and to be fair, all applicants held to that height restriction. The issue before the ZBA is if the height restriction is a hardship, which is an issue that that body must decide. Mr. Gelston noted a number of trees have been cut and that has changed the soil composition, etc., and keeping the remaining trees alive will be tough. The Gateway Commission noted a clear space dramatically impacts the quality of the CT River. Mr. Ventres noted the Gateway Commission reviews any kind of zoning change, in case it impacts the CT River Valley. Ms. Merrow noted both the Gateway and CC Commissions provide input to P&Z and the ZBA. Ms. Merrow reiterated Mr. Gelston's comments and noted that the CT River Valley is an amazing resource and while it may be an inconvenience, it would not be a hardship to redesign and meet the Gateway Commission's height restriction. Chimneys are exempt from the exemption. Mr. Ventres noted P&Z building height is measured for health, safety and welfare and is measured from average roof height. The East Haddam Fire Department cannot fight 4 story fires, so that is why the measurement is important. The Gateway Commission provided an additional requirement of 35 feet from when you step outside the back of the house to the peak of the roof.

Mr. Gelston moved that the CC vote on the height limitation to be in concurrence with the Gateway Commission's height restriction and their decision on 2/23 to oppose granting the requested variance. Seconded Mr. Tarbox, and 5 yeas and 1 nay. Motion passed. Ms. Matthew will provide a letter to the ZBA noting the CC's motion.

6. CC/FFA: Celebrating our collective work at Nichols
Regarding the idea raised at last month's CC meeting, discussion ensued regarding a work party/celebration to celebrate the collective work at Nichols. Ms. Pease suggested a 2-day type of event, with the students working on the trails on a Friday and then having a celebration on Saturday

with a ribbon cutting/food celebration. Mr. Gelston noted the trail needs to be raked and some areas seeded. Ms. Pease noted it probably makes the most sense to have the trails mostly cleaned up, followed by a small work party the next day to finish up the work, followed by a celebration event. Mr. Gelston also noted Mr. Tarbox did most of the heavy work, but there is, in addition to the seeding and raking, some cleanup to be performed regarding growth on other parts of the trails. The forester would like to come out and help as well (no charge to us as he wants to be part of the event). There needs to be an evaluation of the area, then a work party and then a celebration event. Ms. Pease will contact the forester to have him join the evaluation to provide input. Suggested dates include April 20-21, May 25-26, May 4-5 (Ms. Matthewson cannot join the event on the last date). Mr. Gelston suggested it be held on April 20-21, with a rain date of May 4-5. Ms. Matthew asked for a subcommittee to pull together the event with Ms. Pease and the students. The Forestry Management Subcommittee (Mr. Gelston will be the primary contact) will coordinate and plan the event with Ms. Pease and the FFA officer group. Ms. Matthew suggested thinking about who from the community would be good to include/invite in the event.

7. Next meeting – April 3, the River House

8. Announcements and other discussion

Mr. Tarbox suggested increasing the Recording Secretary's hourly rate to cover her extra commute time.

Pepsi has another volunteer project for May 19, 2012. Ms. Matthew asked for a volunteer to pull the submission together. Ms. Maeder volunteered to pull it together and given the submission date of 3/2, she will reach out to the contact to determine if the submission date is hard and fast.

Ms. Carlson noted on April 18, the Ag Commission will submit to the Board of Selectmen the plan for the Harris property. Ms. Carlson noted that all boards and commissions are invited to attend. It will be held at the Grange. The proposal is on the 18 acres of municipal space.

Ms. Maeder has volunteered to work on the property signage and asked that it be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Mr. Smith discussed the meadow parcel at the Patrell property with Mr. Ventres to get that space mowed. Mr. Ventres will look into seeing if the town crew can mow that with the boom mower.

Mr. Gelston noted that if Pepsi allows for a grant submission deadline extension and we are chosen for an event, the Rose Farm Homestead may be a good idea. Mr. Tarbox scoped out 3 different places to put a foot bridge for trails. It would be difficult given the flooding. Ms. Merrow suggested the Davison property may be a good property to work on, but Mr. Smith noted that the property boundaries need to be marked. Ms. Matthew suggested that the CC think about options.

Ms. Matthew noted that on Thursday night, March 8, at 6pm, there is a NEMO training that will be held at the Grange. All members are encouraged to attend.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Merrow to adjourn at 8:47pm, second by Mr. Gelston, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon A. Goyette
Recording Secretary

Conservation Commission Meeting, Town of East Haddam, March 6, 2012

Attachment: Appeal of Stephen M. Somosky, Jr., 135 Creek Row, Map 26, Lot 41



SomoskyEH_022312.
pdf