

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

**East Haddam
Conservation Commission**

January 8, 2013

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the East Haddam Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, January 8, 2013, at 7:25 PM at the River House. The Interim Chairperson (Rob Smith) being in the Chair and the Secretary being Present.

a. Roll Call

Rob Smith, Claire Maeder, Charlotte Gelston, Sue Merrow, Todd Gelston. Others present: Heidi Pease, Scot Mackinnon

2. Approval of Agenda

Add "discussion of budget" and "Chairperson Update" under New Business.

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

3. Approval of Minutes for 12/4/12 and 12/15/12

Motion by Ms. Merrow to approve the 12/4/12 minutes as amended. Second by Ms. Gelston and unanimously approved.

Motion by Mr. Gelston to approve the 12/15/12 minutes as amended. Second by Ms. Gelston and unanimously approved. Ms. Maeder abstained.

4. Old Business

a. Signage

No further action has been taken; it is still on Mr. Smith's agenda to get completed prior to a full frost.

b. Subcommittee updates

Forestry – Mr. Gelston and Mr. Smith walked Rose Farm Homestead and found no need for additional cutting of trees for excess height as a result of the cord wood clean up recently completed. This was in response to a concern raised during the last meeting about additional clean up needed. They also looked and found a suitable location for a bridge. There is a remnant of a small dam and near there is a good location for a foot bridge. It may require a slight section of the trail to be on the Ray of Light Farm property, but there is also an excellent site for horses to ford the stream. That bridge would bring the trail to the east side of the brook on the property. Mr. Gelston noted that the next step is to lay out the trail and confirm the boundaries and then talk with Ray of Light Farm if the trail does go onto Ray of Light Farm property. This is adjacent to the Hembolt property so there is potential for a longer horse trail as well.

Education Outreach – An additional \$5 has been collected for the trail guides, and the box was located at the Grist Mill Market.

Stewardship – Harris trail marking was postponed due to weather. Mr. Smith is planning on having a joint work party between EHLT and CC to conduct trail blazing on Harris. Mr. Gelston noted that it may be a good idea to create a plan and set a goal about marking and mapping trails in 2013. The CC is woefully behind in marking trails, and it would behoove the CC and the town to get properties marked and trails built. Urbanik has been remarked so that the trail is accessible. Rose Farm Homestead, in addition to Harris, needs to have trails created on it. This is in keeping with the policies and regulations of the CC.

c. IWWC and P&Z updates

IWWC – Mr. Gelston noted that IWWC is pretty quiet. The Banner proposal has been dormant.

P&Z – Nothing to report for P&Z.

d. Patrell preserve trimming/mowing

Mr. Smith looked at the issues on Patrell but has not been able to catch up with the Public Works supervisor to discuss the mowing of the invasive species. Will discuss at the next meeting.

e. AG Committee update on Harris

Mr. Mackinnon provided an update on the Harris property. He provided an overview of the property and plan. There is a website that has all the information about lease rates and such at www.Centerforcommunityagriculture.com. The Commission has not pushed hard to advertise to get people engaged and interested. The contractor may not be willing to complete the work remaining during the winter; that remains to be seen. Mr. Gelston asked how many people are interested. There is a total of 12 acres for tillage for the public. Regarding the number of people using this property, it is hard to tell as there may be a farmer who leases the whole field. The Ag Commission has helped set up a CSA at Shugrue Farm. The Ag Commission has been approached by landowners who have extra land to farm as well. Regarding parking, there are several items that must be addressed prior to parking being finalized. There is parking along the old Mt. Parnassus Rd. Mr. Smith noted that there will be a transfer of property from the State to the Town in 2013, which will provide an alternate and better access to the property. The rocks may be removed by the contractor but some are very large, and therefore may not be removed. Regarding the pesticide plan, Mr. Mackinnon noted that the choice is to go organic and only use pesticides if there is a large-scale need. The Ag Commission is looking to get the work done this year. In summary, the parking will likely be along the State park, but right now it is along the old lane. Trails will go around the cultivated land which will be fenced with deer fencing.

f. Trail Marking – Harris

Already discussed under Stewardship.

g. FFA update

Ms. Pease noted that on the Nichols property, the only work done was to post the signs. They came out really nicely. The red trail is on the agenda to be worked on this spring. Ms. Pease noted that she would like to have an FFA and CC work day again. She also met with the Ag

Commission to see what help they needed on Harris. There is still interest in working on Nichols and keeping it maintained. There are some brush piles that the students may need to lower to four feet. Related to the Harris property, the CC will be handling, but the Ag Commission may need additional work that the students can help with.

Ms. Pease noted that the students are interested in helping with other properties, like Rose Farm Homestead. Mr. Smith noted that there are a number of properties that need trail work so there are a number of options. Ms. Matthewson will be in contact with Mr. Smith regarding the red trail. The old sign will be provided to Mr. Smith by Ms. Pease.

5. New Business

a. Update on new potential open space

Update on Pages and Zeiller open space provided by Mr. Smith. \$9M in grants was provided and the town was awarded 40% for Pages and 50% for Zeiller. There is a transfer of some property to connect Harris and Dean, and Olde Field preserve has been connected to Dean as well. Land Trust will be doing publicity for the vote.

b. Budget discussion

There is a budget of \$4400. Mr. Smith noted that when trails are placed on properties, parking is required which can cost money. It could cost about \$1000 per parking area depending on gravel needed, barriers and such. Ms. Merrow noted that these are 1-time expenses which are allocated to the capital budget. The \$4400 is the operating budget. If there is ongoing maintenance that is needed, it would be added to the operating budget. Mr. Gelston suggested that since the CC does not have a plan for trail building, the CC must build a solid plan for capital improvements and ask for the money to accomplish it. Capital expenses are for one-time expenses and there may be a need to create an additional maintenance line in the operating budget. Ms. Gelston suggested moving the \$1500 special transfer to a capital line and then change other supplies to maintenance. Ms. Merrow suggested Mr. Smith talk with Cindy to understand how to incorporate all these changes.

Mr. Smith asked the CC members to send him accomplishments to add to the budget.

c. Update on Chairperson

Mr. Smith provided the CC with an update on the Chairperson, Cynthia Matthew. She is recovering nicely but cannot attend nightly meetings and will likely not be able to attend for the next 6 months to a year. She suggested that perhaps she becomes an alternate member. Mr. Smith has no issue as staying on as Acting Chair, per the CC's request. Mr. Smith has continued to meet with Ms. Matthew regularly and keep her up to date on the work. There are no requirements regarding attendance. Mr. Smith asked the group to think about if they would like to move her spot to an alternate position and replace her permanent seat with another person. The CC will discuss further at the next meeting.

6. Next meeting – February 5, 2013 at The River House

7. Announcements and other discussion

Amount of grant provided to the Ag Commission still must be confirmed.

EHLT Annual meeting is on Friday, January 18 and the State Archeologist is the guest speaker.

8. Adjournment

Conservation Commission Meeting, Town of East Haddam, January 8, 2013

Motion by Ms. Merrow to adjourn at 9:30 pm, second by Ms. Gelston, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon A. Goyette
Recording Secretary

- Arial views of East Haddam