

**East Haddam
Conservation Commission**

April 6, 2010

Adopted May 4, 2010

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the East Haddam Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, April 6, 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, Peggy Carlson, Todd Gelston, TJ Tarbox, and Paul Stuhlman. Others present: Rob Smith, Bruce LaChance, Ally LaChance, Jim Ventres.

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Ms. Carlson to approve the agenda. Second by Mr. Tarbox and unanimously approved.

3. Approval of Minutes for 3/2/10

Mr. Tarbox was in attendance but not listed in the Roll Call – he was added.

3. Approval of Minutes was changed to 2/2 from 1/14.

The corrections of the 1/14/10 minutes were corrected further to specify that Ms. Carlson motioned to approve the minutes. It was previously written as Mr. Carlson, who was not in attendance.

7. Other discussion. Last sentence of paragraph referencing question on Mr. Mackinnon serving corrected to include “no” as related to the issue.

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

4. Requested presentation: Potential open space acquisition – J Ventres

Open Space committee is looking at the Harris parcel, which includes 135 acres with 18 acres for municipal use (possible fields and a firehouse) and the balance left in woodlands, on Mt. Parnassus and the Dean parcel on Parker Road. The Harris parcel is next to the old fire tower property. Topography wise, it is pretty level and easy to traverse, as well as centrally located. The white salt box house is being separated out along with 6 acres. There is an old roadway and a monument on the state parcel. The Dean property is 700 feet to the south. Purchase is of a conservation easement. The Deans are looking to remove 30 acres at top of property for future use. Moderate to strenuous bike trails as well as hiking trails exist and are plentiful. Total acres is 275 or 280; it does have intermittent streams. There is another 140 acre piece next to the Dean property currently undeveloped. By May 3, Mr. Ventres is looking for letters of support from all boards and commissions. Conservation easements cannot be subdivided in the future, but the owner can manage it and use it as it's been used.

There is no price on the Dean property, but it is anticipated to be provided within 2 weeks. The area with conservation easement would have public access.

In terms of conservation, there is value in having a bit of open space within every watershed. Roaring Brook and Hemlock Valley Brook, which cross these properties, are within the Whalebone Creek Watershed. Mr. Ventres is also asking for a letter of support from the Nature Conservancy as well.

Mr. Gelston wrote letters on behalf of the CC which he read to the commission and asked Mr. Ventres for comments. Mr. Ventres suggested no changes. Town Meeting would be to put forth the grant request.

Motion by Mr. Stuhlman to send the letters of support as written. Second by Mr. Gelston and approved, 4 in favor and 1 abstention. Mr. Tarbox abstained.

Ms. Matthew will send signed letters to Mr. Ventres. Mr. Gelston noted that the CC is going to have to provide rationale as to why it makes sense for the town to purchase the properties. Mr. Tarbox asked that a walk of the property be arranged. Ms. Matthew will follow up with Mr. Ventres to get a walk scheduled. Mr. Gelston asked that the majority of the CC attend the walk to see the property.

5. Old Business

- a. Horse Trail Mapping – invited volunteers: Bruce LaChance & Claire Maeder-Plas
There is nothing that currently identifies any horse-riding trails within East Haddam. Ms. Matthew spoke with Mrs. Gelston and Mr. LaChance regarding the creation of a trail guide. Mr. LaChance attended to provide some information around the horse trail guide and meet the CC. The discussions centered around how to create the guide. Mr. LaChance does not know any trails that exist within East Haddam. The creation of a trail guide requires an interested person who spends quite a bit of time within the woods and gets to know areas that would be good horse trails. Mr. LaChance has experience with horse riding and trails and is willing to get involved as he would like to ride. Mr. Tarbox suggested Mr. LaChance walk the Urbanik property which could be a good horse trail. Mr. LaChance would like to get personally familiar with the existing trails and then determine what the potential trails are. There is a potential to create looping trails. Abandoned/discontinued roads would also be good horse trails. Mr. Gelston noted that CT Horse Council has a set of rules for people to follow.
Ms. Matthew noted that perhaps the first way to get started would be with maps of public lands and abandoned roads and getting familiar with them. Ms. Matthew asked Ms. Carlson and Mr. LaChance to discuss further. Ms. Matthew noted that Mr. Ventres can provide Mr. LaChance with information on open space.

b. Subcommittee Updates:

i. Forest Management – T Gelston

Two foresters were interviewed and both were chosen. One lives in Lyme and will be good with inventorying the parcel(s) and public presentations. The other forester is more in tune with logging and harvesting. Each forester will be tapped for their interest and expertise: the Lyme forester can inventory and produce forest management plans, the other forester can be used when logging is going to be done. The two foresters will compliment each other but work independently.
Sample contract for cord wood has been created. Rose Farm Homestead will be handled first. The property must be marked by the forester before the contract is awarded to a logger.
The plan is to use \$400 immediately to get a forest management plan for Rose Farm Homestead completed and then address cord wood clean up/cutting of the needed trees.

Motion by Mr. Tarbox to proceed with the plan to hire a forester to inventory Rose Farm homestead parcel for top, damaged and/or weak species removal as recommended by the Forestry subcommittee. Seconded by Mr. Stuhlman and unanimously approved.

- ii. Boundary Marking – TJ Tarbox
Rose Farm Homestead property is marked and sign is up. Mr. Tarbox posted last week. Urbanik downed trees have been removed and cut up by the Town. The Sienna family and Mr. Tarbox conducted additional cleanup around the Urbanik pond and Mr. Tarbox showed them the Eagle Scout trail.
 - iii. Community Outreach – P Stuhlman
No updates to report.
 - iv. School Program – P. Thomas
Tabled to next meeting.
 - v. Prioritization – C Matthew
Ms. Matthew and the Recording Secretary have conducted quite a bit of work on the prioritization model. Gelston easement has been added to it as well. Mr. Gelston noted that there are 3 easements – one for the EHLT, 46 acres in a purchased easement which has public access and 21 acres were donated with no public access. Mr. Gelston provided further information on the property.
Ms. Matthew will provide the spreadsheet to the CC and it will be discussed further.
 - vi. Plant and Bird Inventory – P Carlson and N MacKinnon
The CT Botanical Society is still scheduled for May 1st.
 - vii. Trail Guide project – C Matthew
Kathy Klein has agreed to help with the new trail guide as has Pat Thomas. Mr. Stuhlman noted he is interested in helping.
- c. New Town website – C Matthew
There is a new website that is underway. Deb Mathiason has invited the CC to add content to an aspect of the town website pertaining to recreational opportunities. Ms. Matthew asked for help in updating the site and the Recording Secretary has offered to help out.

6. New Business

- a. Volunteer applications and alternate vacancy appointment
With Lynn Wilkinson's resignation, there is an open seat. Ms. Matthew asked the Selectmen's Office if there is a restriction to having two members of the same family served on the CC – there is none.
Mr. Scot Mackinnon has provided an application to the Selectmen's Office.
There were two other applications received – a father and son who are members of the Sportman's club and are interested in helping preserve open space. Ms. Matthew also spoke with them about volunteer opportunities. Ms. Matthew would like to invite them to the next meeting.

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Mr. Tarbox and Mr. Gelston suggested waiting for the next meeting to take a vote when the full CC is in attendance.

b. Naming open space parcels

The CC brainstormed about several ideas for naming of properties. The group suggested soliciting the town residents to suggest names, determining protocols for using the seller/donator's name, inclusion of the collaborators and referencing natural features or historic value/connection in the names. The CC will continue to discuss further. There is also interest among the Selectmen and others in the naming of property. Further discussion will establish protocol for naming.

7. Confirmation of next Regular meeting: May 4, 2010, at 7:00pm at The River House

8. Other discussion

Mr. Smith asked the CC to think about providing a letter of support of the 45 acres along the Moodus River currently owned by Donna and Gary Bogan. Ms. Matthew asked Mr. Smith to pull together some information (map, etc.). Mr. Smith will also schedule a walk with a Special meeting afterwards.

There has been no response on the budget that Ms. Matthew provided to the Board of Finance.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Carlson to adjourn, second by Mr. Gelston, unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon A. Hawkins
Recording Secretary

Attachments:

- Letter to all boards and commissions from the East Haddam Open Space Commission and Land Use Office
- East Haddam Conservation Commission letter of support for the Dean property
- East Haddam Conservation Commission letter of support for the Harris property