

Minutes of Conservation Commission Meeting
Chester Town Hall and via Microsoft Teams
4:30 PM January 4, 2024

Members: Lisa Wahle, Rick Holloway*, Sandy Prisloe, Ted Taigen, Kate Hair, Lisa Hayward* (*= not in attendance)

Meeting called to order at 4:33 pm.

1. Minutes: The minutes of the Dec. 14, 2023 meeting were approved unanimously.

2. Audience of citizens: First Selectwoman, Cindy Lignar

3. Correspondence: Email from Bill Cowan, president of Haddam Land Trust indicating that the Zoning official can require the applicant to submit "existing real estate covenants, restrictions, rights-of-way and easements of any nature..." Haddam Land Trust and Chester LT intend to write letters to Chester P&Z.

4. Old Business

- a. **Envirotips.** Suggestions are always welcome. Sandy sent a link to a National Wildlife Federation website that provides a list of local pollinator plants in order of importance when you type in a zip code. Cindy suggested we do a tip on environmentally sound snow removal practices. DPW just completed a course in this.
- b. **Sustainable Chester Updates**
 - (1) Cindy requested a meeting of interested parties to coordinate Chester's Earth Day celebration. Contact Bekah Wright. The CCC plans a plant giveaway again with Rotary. We need to come up with a list for Acer Gardens or another nursery. Need to check with CLT to see if they are planning another town-wide cleanup. The Chester Library is giving away trees for kids to plant during Earth Week.
 - (2) Waste management including recycling options and a new contract with Deep River is on the BOS radar. A separate team should meet with them. Chester Fair Zero Waste and Lobster Fest Zero Waste will be supported by the Commission.
 - (3) A meeting with Deep River and Essex Sustainability Teams is tentatively planned for Feb 21, 7 PM.
- c. **Invasive/Native plant education/action** – Earth Day plant giveaway, see above.
- d. **Cedar Lake Watershed Commission** - No new report
- e. **Old County Road parcel conservation easement.** The application for a house and residence is not yet formally before IWWA. The Commission discussed writing a letter to the regulatory commissions requesting that the deed restriction be observed. Cindy said we may provide her with a summary of our concerns and a request to talk to the Town Attorney, but it may be better to talk to P&Z and their attorney. Lisa W. has consulted with the Zoning official, who said they would be open to a letter at the appropriate time. Ted asked if there was a tax break given to the new owner because of the deed restriction... to be answered by the Tax Assessor.
- f. **Climate Action Plan info session Dec 20:** Lisa and Kate attended, and passed along survey for ideas. Local COGs and DEEP are putting together a proposal for EPA (federal) climate action funds.

New Business

a. **Discussion of 2024 Goals**

- (1) Open Space map and Natural Resources Inventory. Lisa will send a Doodle poll with some dates for an initial meeting. Friday afternoons may work. Several towns in CT have completed this exercise and their reports are available online.

- (2) Encourage inclusion of Low Impact Design, energy conservation, and other sound environmental considerations into Zoning and building regulations.
- (3) Support environmentally sensitive landscaping at Laurel Hill Cemetery – Commission should consult with Christine Nelson.
- (4) Earth Day Events: See Old Business b (1). Lisa will contact Hank Gruner about a vernal pool walk and talk in spring
- (5) Support Cedar Lake Watershed Commission with a dedicated member. Possibly conduct more storm drain stenciling, and non-point source runoff education.
- (6) Electric Vehicle charging station at Water St. lot hit a possible snag b/c it is in a floodplain. Need to assess whether this is even a possibility or find another site. E-Team to consult with Jacobson Engineering
- (7) Continue envirotips.
- (8) Continue native and invasive plant education

b. Lisa requested a vote to be reimbursed for attendance at the November CACIWC meeting, \$75. Unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned 6 PM.

Next meeting February 1, 2024

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Wahle

Carry overs:

Ted will investigate purchasing some of the aluminum frame recycling collectors which proved effective at the Chester Fair. Although primarily for use at the Lobster Fest next year, these might be available for other town events.