

**TOWN OF HADDAM
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
ONLINE VIA GOTOMEETING
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2021
*Approved as Amended at the 28 April 2021 Meeting***

ATTENDANCE

A	Walter Bragoni, Vice Chairman
A	Mardi Hanson-d'Alessandro
X	Gail Reynolds, Chairman
X	Tom Worthley
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

1. Call to Order

Mrs. Reynolds, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Attendance

Attendance was taken.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Tom Worthley motioned to approve the 27 January 2021 agenda as submitted. Gail Reynolds second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Presentation by Attorney Janet Brooks – Discuss Upcoming Training to Recruit Inland Wetland Commission Members Statewide

Ms. Brooks reported she is going to the conservation commissions in Middlesex County because she is partnered with the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District (CRCCD) and have been funded by the Rockfall Foundation to offer four hour orientation sessions to encourage a new generation to volunteer for wetlands commissions. The reason for going before the conservation commissions is due to the thought that a number of conservation members know folks who are more likely to be interested in volunteering for a wetland commission. Ms. Brooks spoke in regard to the aging of wetland commission members and looking for the next set of people who will step in.

In each month February through May, the four hour session will be offered over two afternoons/nights, two hours each session - February on Saturday afternoons, March on Monday nights, April on Thursday nights, and May on Wednesday nights. There is no charge for attending. The sessions will be designed for new members and will not be covering advanced topics. Ms. Brooks reported that the chairmen from Middletown and Portland Conservation Commissions expressed interest in attending as it would give them a better understanding of what type of comments to be submitting to the wetlands agency to improve the reception of their comments; therefore, if conservation commission members would like to join the orientation session, they may. Ms. Brooks stated the up side of virtual meetings may increase the volunteer base as it would allow people who have children or need to travel to participate in meetings.

Mrs. Reynolds explained that Haddam works with the two political parties to try to keep a balance. Ms. Brooks will contact the chairmen of the Democratic and Republican Town Committees. Mrs. Reynolds will bring this matter to the attention of the Haddam Land Trust (HLT).

Mrs. Reynolds asked if the sessions would be advertised through the CRCCD. Ms. Brooks stated yes, as they are an active partner (will be placed on their Facebook page, there will be an active mailing). Ms. Brooks stated the name of the project is Civics2.0 - The Ins and Outs of Wetlands Agencies and the email is civics2.0@yahoo.com. This is a dedicated email for registration or questions.

Mr. Worthley stated one of the places worth reaching out to would be the Facebook group Haddam Wildlife Watchers both for this project as well as potential Conservation Commission members. Mrs. Reynolds will contact them.

5. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Tom Worthley motioned to approve the 18 November 2020 minutes as submitted. Gail Reynolds second. Motion carried unanimously.

Recording Clerk's Note: There was no December 2020 meeting scheduled.

6. Public Comments

There was no one from the public present.

7. Old Business

a) Higganum Center Trails/Walking Path

Land Locked Parcel, Located between the Eugene O. and Mabel Clark Burr Preserve at Cedar Hill and the Nancy L. Planeta Preserve, High Street, - Update – Mrs. Reynolds reported that Bill Cowan, President, Haddam Land Trust (HLT), has been in contact with a representative of the land lock parcel as the owner is deceased. The representative of this parcel has been informed of the HLT's interest in the property to continue connectivity from High Street all the way through to the State Forest (nice for a walking trail).

b) Open Space

Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD) – Mrs. Reynolds reported that the RPOCD is now open for comment and that Haddam's representatives are Raul DeBrigard and Maurice Adams. Noted that the map indicates that Swan Hill is owned by the Town of Haddam rather than the HLT. Residents have until Friday, 29 January 2021, to respond.

Former Gilkinson Property, Park Road - John and Pattie Pytlik, Owners – Mrs. Reynolds reported the Pytlaks have talked to the HLT regarding the purchase of the 400 acre parcel with a conservation easement (rather strict) to the Humane Society of the United States on it as well as two houses. The easement does not allow forestry activities to take place on the property other than the cutting of fire wood by the owner/person living in the house. Discussion followed in regard to whether or not the State would provide funding to obtain this parcel. Mr. Worthley stated receiving state funding may depend on the wording in the easement; and if the HLT will hold the property in a manner which will strengthen the easement, the State may consider assisting financially. Mr. Worthley asked if there would be anything preventing the HLT from selling off the two houses. Mrs. Reynolds stated yes, as the two houses sit within the conservation easement and the easement says they cannot be broken up.

Higganum Cove – Mrs. Reynolds reported it appears as if the Town is going to keep the Cove; and in light of activities that are currently taking place on the parcel, it would be best for the HLT not to own the parcel. From a wildlife perspective, Mrs. Reynolds voiced concern over the Cove being mowed as it had previously been restored by a very qualified wetlands restorationist. Discussion followed in regard to the Cove being used as a recreation site; however, the brook is too shallow for kayaking; the HLT requesting a conservation easement on the Cove; and that the difficulty in keeping the area cleaned up (graffiti, garbage) or monitoring unsafe activities.

Swan Hill – Mr. Worthley stated that a management plan had been done some years ago for the school district; and asked if there was any interest in updating the plan. Mrs. Reynolds stated yes. Mr. Worthley spoke in regard to oak mortality as the result of gypsy moth and the need for decisions to be made as to whether the area should be maintained as oak or maple, beech and birch in the future. If steps are not taken to perpetuate oak as a resource, the area will revert to something else. Mr. Worthley stated there are all

types of questions in regard to resiliency with respect to climate changes that are coming; and if someone doesn't take the lead to demonstrate these kind of things in the woods about town, who's going to. Mr. Worthley felt this would be something the Conservation Commission could talk about, advised about, and find a willing land owner who may be willing to demonstrate that.

Pre-harvest Public Tour, Friday, 29 January 2021, 3:30 p.m., Filley Road, Haddam – Mrs. Reynolds reported that Emery Gluck, State Forester, DEEP, will be conducting a walk for an upcoming irregular shelterwood harvest.

c) Budget

Fiscal Year 2021-2022 - Mrs. Reynolds reported she had not done anything with the budget due to the pandemic and the inability to promote/work on projects or attend conferences.

DEEP Grant – Mr. Worthley reported DEEP has invested funding into a grant program that is born from the Governor's Council on Climate Change work and the information from the report. It's skewed towards urban forestry and equity issues, but there's going to be a call for proposal from communities to do urban forestry type of work and it does not have to be an urban area (an area of conservation need or an area that serves an underserved population). Grants will run from \$10,000 to \$40,000.

d) POCD – Conservation Action Items – Discussion Continued – Commission Report

There was nothing new to report at this time.

Mr. Worthley asked about the pile of wood by the town garage and asked about an educational workshop. Mrs. Batzner stated there was no plan for the wood at this particular time and suggested a call be made to Chris Corsa, Assistant Director of Public Works.

8. New Business

a) Communications/Publications/Correspondence

Mrs. Reynolds reported she had received a bird identification guide from one the Audubon Societies.

9. Land Use Dept. Report

Meetings - P&Z – Approved a 4 lot subdivision between Saybrook Road and Walkley Hill Road (northern end). **Wetlands** – Approved a timber harvest off Candlewood Hill Road on property owned by Ralph Vynalek and a modified site plan for embankment stabilization for 81 Arkay Drive. **EDC** – Has been doing the best they can during the pandemic. **ZBA** – Due to their being no applications, meetings have been cancelled.

10. Adjournment

MOTION: Tom Worthley motioned to adjourn. Gail Reynolds second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

THE 24 FEBRUARY 2021 MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 31 March 2021.