

**TOWN OF HADDAM
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
WEDNESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2023
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

X	Barbara Fernandez
X	Gail Reynolds, Chairman
X	Tom Worthley
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

GUEST: Tom Barnett

1. Call to Order

Mrs. Reynolds, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. Attendance

Attendance was taken. Mrs. Reynolds asked Mr. Barnett if he would be interested in joining the Commission. Mr. Barnett stated no, that he was following his interest; but who knows what the future holds.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Tom Worthley motioned to approve the 29 November 2023 agenda as submitted. Barbara Fernandez second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Tom Worthley motioned to approve the 31 May 2023 minutes as submitted. Gail Reynolds second. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Barbara Fernandez motioned to approve the 26 July 2023 minutes as submitted. Tom Worthley second. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Gail Reynolds motioned to approve the 30 August 2023 minutes as submitted. Tom Worthley second. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Gail Reynolds motioned to approve the 27 September 2023 minutes as submitted. Tom Worthley second. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comments

There was no one from the public present.

6. Old Business

a) Higganum Center Trails/Walking Path

Mrs. Reynolds reported the HLT did conduct a trail day at Swan Hill in early November. A brief discussion followed.

b) Open Space

There was nothing new to report.

c) Budget

Mrs. Reynolds reported the Commission has \$1,000 in their budget. A brief discussion followed regarding reimbursement for conference fees. Mrs. Batzner will submit the paperwork.

d) POCD – Conservation Action Items - Discussion

Mrs. Reynolds gave a brief synopsis of the POCD Implementation Committee (PIC) and their responsibilities for Mrs. Fernandez's benefit. Mrs. Reynolds asked Mr. Worthley if he had seen the Natural Resource Inventory that the Towns of Colebrook and Norfolk have done. A brief discussion followed.

MOTION: Tom Worthley motioned to approve the purchase of a copy of the Natural Resource Inventory compiled by the Towns of Colebrook and Norfolk. Barbara Fernandez second. Motion carried unanimously.

e) Native Plant Ordinance – Review Draft Language – Update

Mrs. Fernandez stated she had received all the information Mrs. Reynolds had provided, but had not had an opportunity to work on it. Mrs. Fernandez stated she asked her neighbor, Steve Carey, who is involved in the invasive cleanups at the Haddam Meadows about this and he asked if it would create more work. Mrs. Reynolds stated no, it's about planting native plants.

f) Swan Hill – Management Plan – Student Fellow - Update

There was nothing new to report.

g) Connecticut Urban Forestry Grant

Mr. Worthley stated he's trying to sift through potential grants to see what would work best for Haddam. Mr. Worthley noted there is a bit of a leadership transition taking place at the Connecticut Urban Forestry Council. A brief discussion followed with Mrs. Reynolds noting that the Connecticut Master Gardener's Association is offering grants up to \$500.

h) Higganum Cove

Mrs. Reynolds reported she met Dottie Gillespie, Cove Committee member, on site and the proposed pollinator garden area is in the area of the former butternut tree. Mrs. Reynolds stated she thought some Virginia creeper going up the rock wall would be nice as well as some honeysuckle, inkberry, shad bush, and ferns intersperse with some flowery plants. Mrs. Reynolds stated on the other side of the wall there's a hillside where impatiens, goldenrods, and asters have been planted. Mrs. Reynolds also stated she would like to plant a butternut tree to replace the one that was cut down.

Mrs. Batzner reported an overlook has been constructed and that Mr. Warner has submitted to the Rockfall Foundation for a grant for a pollinator garden and signage.

7. New Business

a) Saraceno Preserve – Follow Up on Suggestion by Thomas Barnett

Mrs. Reynolds stated that she did inform the Haddam Land Trust (HLT) Board of Mr. Barnett's interest and noted that the HLT doesn't usually conduct work parties in the fall. Mrs. Reynolds asked Mr. Worthley if there was state forest behind the Saraceno Preserve; and if so, there would be hunters out

there during hunting season and workers wouldn't want to be doing trail maintenance at that time. Mr. Worthley stated the west side of the parcel, the southern boundary, is bounded by Cockaponset State Forest and the northern/northwest corner is bounded by property owned by Charles Waggoner (appears to be a landlocked parcel). Mr. Barnett asked if the forest area would be hunting territory during the season; and if so, hunting season dates might be posted to avoid any possible danger (the HLT close the Preserve during this time frame). Discussion followed in regard to educating people and whether there's a clear boundary designating HLT and State properties.

Mrs. Fernandez asked for an update as she was not present when Mr. Barnett originally came before the Commission. Mrs. Reynolds gave a brief synopsis.

Mr. Barnett stated the way the trail is today, he believes it is an accident waiting to happen. Mr. Barnett thought with the growth in Tylerville – Commonwealth of Haddam (formerly the Saybrook at Haddam) plus 28 cottages for independent living, Blueway Commons apartments (Phase 1 finished; Phase 2 not yet started); Bridge Road Apartments (not yet finished) – there will be a concentration of people and a certain number of them will have dogs. Mr. Barnett stated the Preserve is a good place to exercise, but it is not a place where you would want someone who isn't sure of foot. Mr. Barnett stated his hope was that a group of people could get together, clean up the trail, and make it usable. Also discussed the potential for a couple of picnic tables and benches.

Mrs. Fernandez asked what the HLT's policy was for maintaining trails. Mrs. Reynolds stated the HLT does try to maintain the trails, but noted that it is an all-volunteer group and when trail maintenance events are scheduled not too many people show up.

Mr. Barnett stated the population at Commonwealth would not be the group to assist with trail maintenance (only a handful who could), but at Blueway Commons there is a much younger population and possibly approaching the management to try to put together a group that would be interested in developing/maintaining their neighborhood. Mrs. Reynolds felt that was a good idea. Discussion followed.

Mr. Barnett asked about the drive/access way to the right. Mrs. Reynolds and Mr. Worthley stated it's a town road that leads to peoples driveways. Mr. Barnett asked if it would be a factor in this matter – not wanting hikers to go on private property. Discussion followed as to how Mr. Barnett hikes the trail and he will make a point of hiking in both directions to see how it may be marked out. Mr. Barnett asked if the Boy Scouts would be interested in helping. Discussion followed.

Mrs. Fernandez stated the conference spoke in regard to software that shows trails and there's an organization that has interns who will work for the summer. Discussion followed. Mrs. Fernandez will review her notes for the name of the organization. Mr. Barnett stated one thing he observed where he lives is that there are no techies around, so he stopped at the community college to see if their IT program students/staff would help out at the Commonwealth which they did and it has developed into an internship for students and developed a good relationship. Mrs. Fernandez stated this is a possibility the interns. Mrs. Reynolds stated she's very cautious when using students.

Mrs. Reynolds stated the HLT will meet Tuesday, 5 December 2023, 7:00 p.m., Haddam Elementary School, and will discuss the matter with them again. Mrs. Reynolds invited Mr. Barnett to attend the meeting. Mr. Barnett stated he would be happy to work with a group from Blueway Commons if someone else reached out to them. Mr. Worthley stated asking the right question is a way to get people to assist.

b) UConn Native Plants and Pollinators Conference, Thurs., 2 Nov 2023 – Follow Up

No Commissioners attended this conference.

c) CACIWC

Membership – Membership dues have been paid. **46th Annual Meeting & Environmental Conference, Sat., 11 Nov 2023 – Follow Up** - Mrs. Reynolds and Mrs. Fernandez attended the conference. Both found it to be well conducted and were glad they had attended.

d) Communications/Publications/Correspondence

Connecticut Audubon Society – Looking for renewal of membership. **Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC)** – Booklet containing updates and highlights from the year provided.

e) Meeting Schedule

December 2023 – Due to the holidays, no meeting is scheduled. **Next Meeting** - Scheduled for Wednesday, 31 January 2024. **2024 Meeting Schedule** – Copies of schedule distributed to all Commissioners and will be emailed as well.

8. Land Use Dept. Report

No report given.

9. Adjournment

MOTION: Barbara Fernandez motioned to adjourn. Tom Worthley second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

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Recording Clerk

DUE TO THE HOLIDAY SEASON, THERE IS NO DECEMBER MEETING SCHEDULED.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 31 January 2024.