



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187

www.ellington-ct.gov

TEL. (860) 870-3120 TOWN PLANNER'S OFFICE FAX (860) 870-3122

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2018, 7:00 PM
TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT**

PRESENT: Chairman Rebecca Quarno, Vice Chairman David Bidwell, and Regular Members Sean Dwyer, James Gage, Chris Hattin, George Nickerson, and Robert Zielfelder, Jr.,

ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Bidwell, and Alternates Ann Harford and Walter Moody

STAFF

PRESENT: Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner and Samantha Getchell, Recording Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Rebecca Quarno called the Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:01 PM at the Ellington Town Hall Annex, 57 Main Street, Ellington, CT.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (On Non-Agenda Items): None

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Clean Energy Initiatives: Bidwell/Staff – Leads
 - a. Sustainable CT Local Actions State Wide Benefits 2018 Guide and Master Action List

Ms. Houlihan referred to a packet provided to commission members titled "Sustainable CT Local Actions and Statewide Impact". Sustainable CT is voluntary certification program that promotes economic wellbeing in towns. Ms. Houlihan referred to a webinar she took part in about becoming a Sustainable CT team/town and confirmed she thinks it is a good program. Twenty-Six (26) towns in the state are on board for Sustainable CT. Chairman Quarno referred to a program she is familiar with along the same lines as Sustainable CT program for buildings and communities called LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, saying it is a lengthy and expensive process. Ms. Houlihan confirmed that program accomplishments can be met over time. Commissioner Dwyer agreed that many of the steps on the Master Action List are achievable. Chairman Quarno noted the program might broaden energy efficiency initiatives for the town and staff. Ms. Houlihan asked the committee to look over the Master Action List to see if there are tasks they could achieve for the town. Chairman Quarno asked if there would be a way for residents to get involved. Ms. Houlihan confirmed that getting someone from the farmers market and or the school involved would be beneficial too. After further review and clarification of Sustainable CT, the committee agreed the topic was positive and will brainstorm further about how to participate.

Ms. Houlihan referred to the Home Energy Solutions (HES) campaign. Eversource confirmed that Ellington is due donation checks from Aiello for \$250, Fox Heating for \$175, and EES for \$350. Ms. Houlihan reached out to all vendors thanking them for their participation and inviting them to share ideas to promote energy efficiency.

Ms. Houlihan has not had an opportunity to follow up on the free solar install from Earthlight (2017 Solarize Ellington Campaign), but will try to before the next meeting.

2. Update – Ellington Hockanum River Committee: Harford/Nickerson – Leads
Ms. Houlihan reported that the large tree on the Windermere trail has been removed.
3. Report - Working Farmland Preservation Program: Gage/Staff – Leads
 - a. Review of Cost of Community Services Study

Ms. Houlihan asked the Commission if they reviewed the draft report since the last meeting. Chairman Quarno confirmed that she reviewed the draft. Commissioner Dwyer discussed the intent of the study stating that the commission can use it to support preserving open space and farmland in Ellington. He noted that the report shows that preserving farmland and open space can save money. The commission looked over the draft and noted grammatical changes. They also asked that the term mill rate appear in lowercase throughout the document versus being capitalized at times. Ms. Houlihan will share the corrections with the consultant.

Commissioner Dwyer referred to page 10 and suggested that the Board of Education be a separate item versus hidden in a paragraph. The commission agreed the information on this page should be reorganized as a list of bulleted items so it reads more clearly.

The draft report was shared with the Town Assessor and Finance Department but no comments have been returned yet.

Chairman Quarno asked if it is typical that the cost of services for commercial is similar to cost of services for open space. The commission reviewed information listed in the report for other towns and noted similar results.

Ms. Houlihan presented an invoice for services rendered to date of \$6,000, noting the maximum payout for the project is \$7,200. The commission agreed to authorize payment.

MOVED (GAGE) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) (PASSED UNANIMOUSLY) TO APPROVE (W/ MODIFICATIONS) COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES STUDY AND AUTHORIZE PAYMENT OF SERVICES FOR \$6,000.

Ms. Houlihan talked about the application for farmland preservation of 39.23 acres on Jobs Hill Road. She reported that the Department of Agriculture analyzed the two appraisals and issued an offer to the family on December 14, 2017. She received a phone call from the family representative, Joseph Anselmo, explaining that the family declined the offer. Ms. Houlihan shared her disappointment and asked the family to reevaluate their decision. Mr. Anselmo explained that multiple family members are involved and there is not enough support to accept the offer. The commission noted that this is the second attempt at the Community Farmland Preservation Program and both offers were declined by the land owners.

Commissioner Zielfelder asked if the family indicated what they were hoping to receive for the

property, to which Ms. Houlihan confirmed that such information is required as part of the application. Commissioner Gage explained that value of land varies depending on factors like location, access, and soil classification. Commissioner Dwyer asks if the denial could create problems with the farmland preservation program going forward. Discussion ensued about the possibility of requiring applicants to pay a portion of appraisal fees and or creating a formal screening questionnaire. Future applicants will be asked to meet with the commission prior to application in addition to review of applications. Commission members supported a better screening process.

4. Report - Open Space Preservation Program: Gage – Lead
Commissioner Gage reported that it will be approximately six (6) months before closing on the Bellante property, noting that a survey of the land is in the works now.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. FY17-18 Budget Expenditure Update
There were no questions on the budget.
2. Approval of the February 6, 2018 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) (PASSED 4-YEA, 0-NAY, 1 ABSTENTION-HATTIN) TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence:
 - a. 2018 CT Land Conservation Conference – Saturday, March 17, 2018
James Gage is attending.
 - b. CT Town & City Agriculture Cow Clique article
 - c. Oakridge Times, February 15, 2018
Ellington received notification from FEMA about the Shetucket Watershed project that includes the Willimantic River along the eastern board of Ellington and Stafford. The River is bound by CL&P property the entire length in Ellington. Given the fact there is no potential for future development, hazards are not present and Ellington will not participate in the project.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (DWYER) SECONDED (ZIELFELDER) (PASSED UNANIMOUSLY) TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:23P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Getchell, Recording Clerk