

EAST LYME COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES
REGULAR MEETING - VIA ZOOM
FEBRUARY 10, 2021

Present: Penny Heller
Don Danila
Mark Christensen

FILED

Absent: Art Carlson, Chairman
Laura Ashburn

Feb 18, 20 21 AT 11:06 AM/PM

Also Present: Harvey Beeman, Alternate
Ron Nichols, Alternate
Rose Ann Hardy, Ex officio

Brooke Horvath ATC
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

CALL TO ORDER. Ms. Heller called the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting of February 10, 2021 to order at 7:00 p.m.

MOTION (1): Mr. Danila moved to seat Ron Nichols for Art Carlson and Harvey Beeman for Laura Ashburn. Seconded by Mark Christensen. (3-0) Unanimous

- I. **PUBLIC DELEGATIONS.** There were no guests.
- II. **MINUTES -January 13, 2021.** Ms. Heller asked for additions, deletions, or corrections the January 13, 2021 Minutes of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources.

The following correction was noted: On page 2, under III, B. the last paragraph Mr. Bialowans name was misspelled.

MOTION (2): Mr. Danila moved to accept the January 13, 2021 East Lyme Conservation of Natural Resources Minutes, as corrected. Seconded by Mr. Christensen. (5-0) Unanimous

III. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Election of Officers.** Commission members were asked for nominations for Chairman of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources for 2021.

MOTION (3): Mr. Nichols moved to nominate Art Carlson as Chairman of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources for 2021. Seconded by Mr. Christensen.

There were no other nominations.

A vote was taken and Mr. Carlson was unanimously elected Chairman of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources for 2021.

Commission members were asked for nominations for Secretary of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources for 2021.

MOTION (4): Mr. Beeman moved to nominate Penny Heller as Secretary of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources for 2021.

There were no other nominations.

A vote was taken and Ms. Heller was unanimously elected Secretary of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources for 2021.

- B. Review of Updates to Open Space Plan Land List/EL Land Trust Purchases.** Mr. Christensen reported on properties that the East Lyme Land Trust is working on acquiring. There was discussion on questions concerning a Town property that has a designated use as a woodlot. Ms. Hardy agreed to check on it and report back to this Commission.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Sustainability_CT Program: EL Giving Garden Funding Start and Pollinator Pathway** Ms. Heller reported she met with Mr. Goeschel and others regarding pollination pathways. Margorie Meekhoff, chair of the EL Pollination Pathways group (ELPP), met with Ms. Heller, Mr. Christensen, and Mr. Goeschel earlier February 10th to determine what open space properties in Town the ELPP could use. They are starting on the Sustainability Grant. This Commission is supportive of the East Lyme pollination project and would like to see areas planted in flowers for birds and butterflies. Mr. Nichols stated he would like to support the project but wants to wait to see a written plan. Ms. Heller will be helping this group obtain a Sustainability_CT grant and added when working through the grant process they would have to identify specific properties to be planted. Ms. Heller informed the Commission they hope to submit a grant proposal in March or April and will provide the Commission with the plan drawn up for the grant. Mr. Christensen felt the round-about near the former UBS and the Middle School should be considered. Ms. Heller commented that they have already started planting an area of the EL Giving Garden behind the Flanders Baptist Church.

Ms. Heller also stated that the ELPP would like to plant areas at the entrance to Darrow Pond Reserve and reported that Mr. Goeschel is suggesting a control burn around the parking lot at Darrow Pond. Ms. Heller felt the area they would like to plant is compatible with the New England cottontail interests. They would like to have an educational plaque for the pollinators. Mr. Goeschel also had mentioned seeking grant monies from the Municipal Council of Government. Mr. Beeman asked if they had a minimum size area they would like? Mr. Christensen felt they could start with smaller areas. He suggested that they work with the Parks and Recreation Director regarding Darrow Pond. Mr. Nichols suggested Hole-in-the Wall to support the educational location.

- B. Pitch Pine Park at Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve.** Ms. Heller reported the OHNP has received permission to acquire small trees and bring them to the park. Mr. Greg Decker of the Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve has found an area where pitch pine seedlings can be dug up for transplanting. She added Mr. Decker has also collected seeds.
- C. Discussion of Darrow Pond Forestry Report.** Mr. Carlson was absent, and there was no report.

Mr. Beeman reported at our January meeting Mr. Carlson discussed establishing a Trail Subcommittee. This topic needs to be addressed further in the next meeting. Mr. Christensen felt there was an increased interest in hiking and therefore the trails need more maintenance.

V. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Communications.** Mr. Danila reported he saw a recent publication from the Connecticut Council on Environment Quality noting desired legislation in 2021. The first initiative was to protect forest and agricultural lands. CEQ wants to have solar energy projects of less than 2 megawatts, which are now exempt, reviewed by DEEP and the Department of Agriculture. They also want to have the Legislature define “materially affect” with respect to projects on agricultural land. Other priorities include a revised bottle bill and releases of home heating oil. The CEQ wishes to increase deposits on bottles from 5 cents to 10 cents and expand the types of containers subject to a deposit. The Council also would like to require improved safety features for heating oil storage systems, inspections of faulty equipment recorded in a data base, and allocation of additional funding for replacement of fuel storage tanks.

Mr. Christensen asked if construction has begun on the Solar Farm in Waterford. Mr. Danila reported he was informed by Maureen Fitzgerald, Waterford Environmental Planner that the developers will probably start clear cutting trees this month and finish clearing land this spring. He has looked at the D&M Plan for construction that they will be using and found it similar to materials previously submitted to the CT Siting Council.

Mr. Nichols asked if Mr. Goeschel has discussions with the Waterford Town Planner? Mr. Danila replied Mr. Goeschel was involved with the East Lyme Solar Farm through our town’s Inland Wetlands Agency, but did not know if he had any contacts with the Town of Waterford for the Waterford project.

- B. Agribusiness Subcommittee.** Mr. Christensen reported the Agribusiness Subcommittee did not meet in January. It plans to have Open Farm Day in mid-July at the Samuel Smith Farm. He noted that a new goat farmer who also hosts horseback riding is interested in participating. The Memorial Day Parade will probably be cancelled so no float will be built.

Mr. Christensen asked if the boundary dispute between East Lyme and Waterford in the Niantic River was still outstanding. Ms. Hardy added that it has not been resolved. The boundary line is in question because the river has changed over time and records clearly describing it are missing.

Ms. Heller asked if there was any resolution on Mr. Londregan’s oyster farming. Ms. Hardy agreed to check on it. He is minimally farming while the State is working on bridge repairs.

Mr. Christensen reported the wetland upland review area has been changed to 300’ from 100’ and will remain in force until legal appeals are resolved.

- C. Chairman’s Report.** Mr. Carlson was not in attendance and there was no report.

- D. Ex-Officio Report.** Ms. Hardy reported the Board of Selectmen is beginning its budget reviews. They will call in boards or commissions if a review is needed. Because of the virus it is not a time to increase a budget unless it is deemed necessary.

She noted that the town residents should be made aware of all the services available in town. For example, The Commission on Aging delivers Meals-on-Wheels to 25-35 homebound seniors. Individuals using their own vehicles volunteer to deliver the meals. Lillian's Restaurant distributed 500 fresh meals on Christmas to senior citizens at no cost. Other community groups added items with the meals.

Ms. Hardy also reported that the Town has authorized \$25,000 towards a grant to study how to improve the safety of pedestrian and bicycle travel on Route 161 from the high school in Flanders to Niantic. The area along Gorton Pond will be problematic and a cantilevered walkway is proposed. She stated she wants to be sure it protects the lake and to be sure no properties are taken by eminent domain. Ms. Hardy commented that she was not in favor of adding another lane to Rt 161 because it would mean taking properties and adding more pollution. The Zoning Commission will have a Public Hearing its next meeting at 7 p.m. The developer will present its plan on which the public may comment on.

Ms. Hardy also commented that, with the sale of their camp area in Flanders, the Girl Scout Organization has donated a plot of land to the Town for public use. There will be a housing development going in on this property with access to Pattagansett Lake.

MOTION (5): Mr. Danila moved to adjourn the February 10, 2021 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting at 8:00 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Nichols. (5-0), unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary