

EAST LYME COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 9, 2021

Present: Art Carlson, Chairman
Penny Heller
Don Danila
Mark Christensen

FILED

June 18 20 21 AT 11:40 AM/PM
Mark Christensen
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Absent: Laura Ashburn
Ron Nichols

Also Present: Harvey Beeman, Alternate
Michelle Williams, East Lyme Planning Commission (guest)
Rose Ann Hardy, Ex officio

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Carlson called the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting of June 9, 2021, to order at 7:00 pm.

MOTION (1): Mr. Danila moved to seat Harvey Beeman for Laura Ashburn. Seconded by Ms. Heller. (3-0) Unanimous.

- I. **PUBLIC DELEGATIONS.** There were no guests initially; Ms. Williams joined midway.
- II. **MINUTES -May 12, 2021.** Mr. Carlson asked for additions, deletions, or corrections to the May 12, 2021 Minutes of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources.

MOTION (2): Mr. Danila moved to accept the May 12, 2021 East Lyme Conservation of Natural Resources Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Ms. Heller. (4-0) Unanimous.

III. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Discussion of Potential Town Projects with New Professional Planner (to be hired).

Mr. Carlson spoke to Mr. Goeschel about a state project worth \$500,000 for environmental projects. Mr. Goeschel stated he would speak with the Board of Selectmen. The deadline is September 21, 2021. It was felt it would be a perfect match for the Darrow Pond project.

Ms. Heller felt it would help Mr. Goeschel to have an individual who can do GIS. Also, Town wide sidewalk repair and extension is needed. Rt. 161 interchange is still going forward. Ms. Hardy suggested using \$20,000 to hire a Landscape Architect to come up with a plan for Town use of 100 acres of property at Darrow Pond. Ms. Hardy, as Ex-Officio, was requested by the Commission to have discussion with Town Attorney to restore the original intent of the 50 acres not 100 as previously discussed.

IV. **OLD BUSINESS**

- A. **Updates to Open Space Plan Land List/East Lyme Land Trust Purchases.** Mr. Carlson reported the Land Trust submitted a proposal to DEEP for the purchase of the Hathaway property. This property, which borders 3500' on Pattagansett Lake and 500' on the Pattagansett River, is a

good area for migratory birds and would be an educational asset to the town. Mr. Carlson and the Forester walked the property. There are many very large old-growth trees. There are ten acres of open fields. It has a freshwater marsh. It is in the watershed over the aquifer. Until this year the leading DEEP grant candidates would receive 60% of the stated market value and now, they would only receive 25%. It would be necessary to borrow \$800,000 at 2%. There are 9,400 taxing units and 13,500 registered voters in East Lyme. Each of the 9,400 taxing units would only pay \$4.40 per year towards financing the purchase. Ms. Hardy asked would the Land Trust be owner and manager of this? Mr. Carlson replied they would. He would like to engage the Board of Education. Ms. Hardy suggested getting the Aquifer Commission involved. Mr. Carlson stated the Land Trust will visit boards and commissions. There is room on this property for 130 houses, which if built would have increased taxes due to increased services required. Ms. Heller felt this was a gem of property.

- B. SustainabilityCT Program: East Lyme Pollinator Pathway Project.** Ms. Heller informed the Commission she gave a talk to Ms. Ashburn's Environmental Class about the progress of this program. Ms. Hardy stated Ms. Heller was very well received by that class.

Commission member Mark Christensen joined the meeting.
Michelle Williams joined the meeting.

Ms. Heller reported through the SustainabilityCT Crowd Funding vehicle the Pollinator Pathway Project has almost received the entire money needed for machinery and seeds. There has been discussion on working with the schools. Presently there are approximately six active individuals. Mr. Christensen added they have seeded the Samuel Smith property.

- C. Pitch Pine Park at Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve.** Mr. Danila reported the Parks and Recreation Commission have approved naming the Pitch Pine Park after Greg Decker. Mr. Danila stated Mr. Decker has successfully grown the pitch pine from seeds he collected.
- D. Discussion of Darrow Pond Forestry Report.** Mr. Carlson reported he spoke with David Putnam, Director of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Putnam would like to keep Darrow Pond natural. Mr. Carlson agreed to help him. Mr. Carlson obtained a sample of the water and found it is drinkable. Mr. Carlson showed the Commission signs to be put up that no ATVs or motorcycles are to be on the walking paths. This will be an Eagle Scout project.

MOTION (3): Ms. Heller moved that this Commission supports placing signs that no ATVs or motorcycles are to be on footpaths. Seconded by Mr. Christensen. (5-0) Unanimous.

Ms Heller brought up discussion of an email from Mr. Goeschel who inquired whether this Commission should get involved in regulations guiding agricultural products. Ms. Heller added the State Director of Planning, Jean Davis, wanted to put out guidelines for regulations. CTRC & D plans to apply for grants to assist towns in putting regulations to facilitate farms in making compost facilities. They would like to extend our base line knowledge among planners. Do they know how to compost or about regulations on it? Mr. Christensen reported Mr. Tom Kalal is working on this.

Ms. Hardy stated she was contacted by local residents who wish to attend the next meeting of this Commission to discuss composting town wide. Mr. Danila felt this would be a huge effort. Commercial entities would also need to be included.

V. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

- A. **Communications.** Mr. Danila discussed an article in Consumer Reports entitled "How Safe is our Drinking Water." This article discussed PFAS, arsenic, and lead in U.S. drinking water. Mr. Carlson added the EPA recommends the level of 70 parts per trillion for PFAS. Mr. Danila stated 117 of 120 samples were tested and were shown to have PFAS. Mr. Carlson stated that in East Lyme the focus for PFAS was on Stone Ranch and the Four Mile River. Ms. Hardy stated there is a private well source at that location. The Town took it over and after a few years did not use it. Ms. Heller informed the Commission of a Webinar on road salts by DEEP to be held on Wednesday June 30, 2021 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Michelle Williams stated she appreciates the work of this Commission. She has been involved with the POCD and has spoken to Joe Bragaw, Public Works Director, about municipal composting. SCRRA is piloting it in Stonington to determine what compost you get. Their speaker stated there is grant money on how to compost at your school. Ms. Hardy stated we have a new food service that might wish to do that. Ms. Hardy asked if the Commission wishes to invite Mr. Bragaw to the next meeting of this Commission? Ms. Heller stated if residents have concrete information Mr. Bragaw should hear it. Ms. Hardy felt maybe this composting project can be done at the landfill. Mr. Danila stated this has been done through the trash pickup in other states. Ms. Hardy felt to make it mandatory is not a good idea. Ms. Heller felt it would be a large endeavor for restaurants and schools.

- B. **Agribusiness Subcommittee.** Mr. Christensen reported "Farm Day" will be held on July 17 at the Samuel Smith House from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Rock Acres Farm will have horses and sell goat milk soap. There will be chickens, sheep and goats. Mr. Christensen resigned as Chairman of the Historical Properties Commission because of his workload. Ben Bullock has agreed to be Chairman.
- C. **Chairman's Report.** Mr. Carlson reported Mr. Beeman is Chairman of the Trails Committee. Mr. Carlson informed the Commission there were two adults and boy scouts camping at Darrow Pond. Three Eagle Scout projects were completed and four more Eagle Scouts are interested.
- D. **Ex-Officio Report.** Ms. Hardy reported the Board of Selectmen are prioritizing requests for the American Rescue Funds. We have had requests from Parks and Recreation for Darrow Pond, from the Historical Society and the Historic Cemetery Commission. The limitations on the program are you cannot reimburse yourself. It needs to be clearly related to the pandemic. It seems increased public health and availability of open space could be considered. Mr. Carlson stated open space helps one's physical and mental state. The Commission was asked to think about a water project.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION (4): Mr. Danila moved to adjourn the June 9, 2021 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting at 8:35 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Danila. (5-0), unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary