

EAST LYME COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 8, 2023

Present: Penny Heller  
Don Danila  
Laura Ashburn  
Harvey Beeman  
Mark Christensen  
Marjorie Meekhoff, Alternate

Absent: Steve Dinsmore

Also Present: Rose Ann Hardy, Ex officio

RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
EAST LYME, CT  
2023 NOV 16 P 2:40  
Caulfield  
TOWN CLERK

**I. CALL TO ORDER.** Ms. Heller Chair, called the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources of November 8, 2023 to order at 7:00 p.m.

**II. SEATING ALTERNATES (IF NECESSARY)**

**MOTION (1):** Mr. Danila moved to seat Marjorie Meekhoff for Laura Ashburn.  
Seconded by Mr. Beeman. (4-0) Unanimous.

**III. CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA.**

**MOTION (2):** Mr. Danila moved to add under New Business a. Letter of Support for the Nature Conservancy/CT DEEP proposal. Seconded by Mr. Christensen. (5-0) Unanimous.

Commission member Laura Ashburn joined the meeting.

**IV. CALL FOR PUBLIC DELEGATIONS.** There were no guests.

**V. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 11, 2023.** Ms. Heller asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the October 11, 2023 Minutes.

**MOTION (3):** Mr. Christensen moved to approve the October 11, 2023 Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Beeman. Ms. Heller abstained from voting. (4-0-1) Motion carried.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

a. **Letter of Support for Nature Conservancy/CT DEEP Proposal.** Ms. Heller was invited to review the grant proposal of the CT chapter of the Natural Conservancy (TNC) and CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) titled Bride Brook Estuary Transformation: Restoring Ecosystems and Building Resilience at Rocky Neck State Park. TNC staff has asked for a letter of support from this Commission, and Ms. Heller submitted a draft for members to review. The proposal for this is \$25 million grant must be submitted by the end of November.

**MOTION (4):** Mr. Danila moved to approve the letter of support as drafted by the Chair. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (5-0) (See attached).

## **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. **Update on citizens' complaints** Mr. Danila discussed recent actions by CT DEEP on citizen's complaints about probable violations occurring in a property located at 8 Brookfield Drive containing a tributary to Latimer Brook and another at a home on Pattagansett Lake. Eric Thomas of CT DEEP followed up with the DEEP Permit Enforcement Staff following online citizen complaints made by two East Lyme residents. Mr. Goeschel, East Lyme Inland Wetlands Agent, had discussions with these homeowners about their rights and responsibilities. Some issues associated with the Pattagansett Lake property were dealt with by other town staff.

On October 12 the Inland Wetlands Commission had a Special Meeting. Mr. Goeschel issued a cease-and-desist order regarding the Brookfield Drive property. A Soil Scientist employed by the landowner of this property responded. Mr. Goeschel noted a petition on file for a Public Hearing. Mr. Danila expressed interest in helping these homeowners.

- b. **Condition of the Hole-in-the Wall Stormwater Project.** Mr. Danila reported the Niantic Watershed Committee supports this project. Ms. Meekhoff will be involved in the design of the plantings.
- c. **2023 RBV Sampling.** This year's CT DEEP citizens science program Riffle Bioassessment for Volunteers or RBV was completed in a joint effort by volunteers from this Commission (Mr. Danila and Ms. Heller), the Niantic River Watershed Committee and the National Estuarine Research Reserve. This program uses collections of aquatic, macroinvertebrates to assess water quality. Sampling took place on October 24 at two stations in Latimer Brook and one in the Fourmile River. On October 31 one station was sampled in Cranberry Meadow Brook. To summarize, the sampling and sample processing in the field went well. In Latimer Brook behind the IGA Plaza, we collected 5 Most Wanted forms, 5 Moderately Wanted, 3 Least Wanted, and 2 Others. At the Colony Road site of Latimer Brook, the totals for the same categories were 2-7-2-3. Fourmile River had 3 (1 questionable)-4-1-1. This year we found a better sampling area in Cranberry Meadow Brook than in the past, having more stones in a stream riffle. Results there were still less than expected given this pristine area near the stream's headwaters in Nehantic State Forest. The totals were 3 (2 questionable)-7-2-2. Totals aren't necessarily certain and questionable identifications resulted from the small size of some aquatic insects collected. Voucher samples of collected macroinvertebrates will shortly be turned over to CT DEEP, which will have its experts or contractors confirm identifications.

## **VIII. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

- a. **Communications.** There was no correspondence received.
- b. **Agribusiness Subcommittee.** Mr. Christensen reported the Samuel Smith Homestead's harvest events had approximately seventy individuals in attendance even though it was a rainy day. The Agribusiness Subcommittee made applesauce. Cider was also available. The Leos helped.

The Agribusiness Subcommittee and Pollinator Pathways group are partnering for the Ag Winter Lecture Series to be held at the East Lyme Library.

January 27 at 2 p.m. Lydia Pan, PhD, President and Program Coordinator Wild Ones Mountain Laurel Chapter will talk on Bringing Nature Home.

February 3 at 2 p.m. Tim Londregan will discuss current production and future plans for the Niantic Bay Shellfish Farm. The snow date will be February 10.

March 8 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. the following speakers will host the public: DOT Project Engineer Andrew Millovitsch, Robert Obey, Resident Engineer, Susan Fiedler, DOT Landscape Architect, and Andrew Piraneo of DEEP Environmental Resource Compliance Unit on the DOT 161 Interchange Project at the DOT Field House, Suite 215, 339 Flanders Road, Latimer Brook Commons, East Lyme.

March 23 at 2 p.m. in the East Lyme Room at the East Lyme Public Library on Society Road Richard Taylor, Master Wildlife Conservationist, of Connecticut DEEP Wildlife Team, will give a presentation on coyote's history, diet and behavior. He will offer guidance on living with Eastern coyotes.

April 6 at 3 p.m. Rosemary Ostfeld will give a lecture on local and sustainable food in Connecticut.

September 12 Susan Felder, Landscape Architect, will give a lecture on the creation of a new marsh and wetland area.

The Subcommittee members will hold an informational program at the Junior High showing students how they can train for agricultural careers and chose to go to Ledyard High School Vo-Ag to work with growing plants or caring for animals.

- c. **Sustainable CT Subcommittee.** Actions the subcommittee members are working on include the following:
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Audits are being developed using AARP Tool Kits as guidance. The bike audit will be carried out with the assistance of Mike McDowell, East Lyme Parks and Recreation Supervisor. The pedestrian audit will be carried out by East Lyme High School students in Ms. Ashburn's Environmental Studies class.
  - A community Compost Collection program is being explored with the assistance of Gary Goeschel, East Lyme Planning Commission Director, and Joe Bragaw, East Lyme Public Works Director. A citizens' survey has been conducted and a vendor has been interviewed.
  - A "Reuse" program for clothing and household items is being explored.
  - Information describing the distribution of species of concern within East Lyme, contained in the CT Natural Diversity Database and other sources, needs to be made more accessible and user friendly for homeowners, developers, and interested citizens. Methods to do this are in ongoing discussion.
  - Energy Audit of all town-owned buildings using a program developed at UCONN.
- d. **Pollinator Pathway East Lyme (PPEL).** Ms. Meekhoff reported Diba Khan-Bureau, a professor at Three Rivers College, is able to help with the CT DEEP Natural Diversity Database project

(the fourth bullet described above) by providing a student to help extract local data from the statewide program.

Ms. Meekhoff reported a sculpturer from Maine is willing to do a stainless-steel sculpture for the Community Center Garden.

Ms. Meekhoff will contact Elizabeth Dowd, who works with Indigenous People through the East Lyme historical Society, to get more information about the native plantings local tribes used.

Ms. Meekhoff suggested having a Mother's Day Plant Sale at the Seebeck Pavilion. She will need a subcommittee for it.

She has invited a gentleman from Yale to put together a public talk describing historic trees including the extremely old oak at Darrow's Pond.

She informed the Commission that Invasive species have been tagged at Hole-in-the-Wall to begin restoration of the runoff control ravines. Ms. Heller stated these areas can be burnt and covered to eliminate the nonfunctional vegetation. Ms. Hardy suggested asking the Fire Department to do a training burn.

Ms. Meekhoff did home assessments this year in Waterford and Salem. She received a \$600 donation and an \$800 donation. She would like the Zoning Commission to continue their work in passing an ordinance restricting the use of non-native species on town property. Ms. Hardy stated there will be a Public Hearing on December 8. It is hoped there will be an ordinance on 100% of all development and town property. Mr. Mulholland asked for our approval.

- e. **Chairman's Report.** There was no further discussion from the Chairman.
- f. **Ex-Officio Report.** Ms. Hardy was congratulated on her re-election.

She stated some commissions have not submitted their Annual Reports and is investigating if the practice is still required.

The newly elected selectmen will be sworn in on December 4. Appointments to boards and commissions will be made thereafter. The Board of Selectmen are working on filling vacancies.

## **V.ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION (5): Mr. Danila moved to adjourn the November 8, 2023 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources at 8:15 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (5-0) Unanimous.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary**

November 8, 2023

NOAA Restoration Center  
NOAA Fisheries (F/HC3)  
1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14853  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Letter in Support of the Application *Bride Brook Estuary Transformation: Restoring Ecosystems and Building Resilience at Rocky Neck State Park*

Dear NOAA Restoration Center,

On behalf of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources (CCNR), I am pleased to support the application submitted by The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut (TNC) under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's 2023 Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants to restore the Bride Brook estuary and improve and enhance coastal access at Rocky Neck State Park, East Lyme, CT.

TNC is collaborating with project partners – including the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation – to assess the system at the estuary-scale, which will inform and enable transformational, resilient restoration activities. The primary mission of the CCNR is the preservation of East Lyme's natural resources which links directly with the goals of this project. The Commission has worked successfully for decades to expand the town's open space and protect the artisanal drinking water supply. Rocky Neck is the town's largest coastal reserve and therefore restoring the brook and marsh ecosystem within the park is vital to preserve future inland marsh advancement zones as well as habitat that surrounds the largest alewife run in the state. This project will also facilitate the persistence of its crucial habitats in the face of climate change and increase people's access to and amplify the benefits from their public coastal natural resources.

Thank you for this opportunity to support *Bride Brook Estuary Transformation: Restoring Ecosystems and Building Resilience at Rocky Neck State Park*. If I can provide any additional information, please feel free to contact me at [pnheller@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pnheller@sbcglobal.net).

Sincerely,

Penelope Howell Heller

Chair, CCNR