

EAST LYME COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 13, 2023

Present: Penny Heller  
Don Danila  
Laura Ashburn  
Harvey Beeman  
Mark Christensen

Absent: Steve Dinsmore, Alternate  
Marjorie Meekhoff, Alternate

Also Present: Rose Ann Hardy, Ex officio

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EAST LYME, CT  
2023 DEC 18 A 8:40  
Cassidy  
TOWN CLERK

**I. CALL TO ORDER.** Ms. Heller, Chair, called the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources of December 13, 2023 to order at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Hardy swore in Harvey Beeman.

**II. SEATING ALTERNATES (IF NECESSARY)** A quorum was established.

**III. CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA.** Election of Officers were added to the Agenda.

Ms. Hardy asked for nominations for Chair to the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources for 2024.

**MOTION (1):** Ms. Ashburn moved to nominate Penny Heller as Chair of the Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources (CCNR) for 2024. Seconded by Mr. Beeman.

Ms. Hardy asked if there were any other nominations for Chair, and there were none.

**A vote was taken and Ms. Heller was unanimously elected Chair of the CCNR for 2024.**

Ms. Hardy asked for nominations for Secretary of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources for 2024.

**MOTION (2):** Ms. Ashburn moved to nominate Don Danila as Secretary of the East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources (CCNR) for 2024. Seconded by Mr. Christensen.

Ms. Hardy asked if there were any other nominations for Secretary, and there were none.

**A vote was taken and Mr. Danila was unanimously elected Secretary of the Commission CCNR for 2024.**

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

**V. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 8, 2023.** Ms. Heller asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the November 8, 2023 Minutes.

**MOTION (3):** Mr. Danila moved to approve the November 8, 2023 Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Christensen. (5-0) Unanimous.

#### **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

a. **Report on December 7 Local Work Group Meeting at UConn-Avery Point-D. Danila.** Mr. Danila reported he received an invitation by the Eastern CT Conservation District to a Local Work Group Meeting at UConn-Avery Point. One presentation was the Natural Resources Conservation Service budget for Connecticut. Federal money was allocated to various programs. Participants included a number of conservation groups, land trusts, etc. Mr. Danila thought the meeting was quite interesting. Some towns may be able to look into funding for various watershed programs. Yale did a study of various projects. One was in East Lyme. There will be a write-up of the meeting and presentations that Mr. Danila will share later with the Commission.

#### **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

a. **Update on citizens' complaints** Mr. Danila attended an Inland Wetlands meeting last week. There were residents from the Brookfield Drive neighborhood who spoke under Public Delegations about their concerns, including flooding, if the lot at 8 Brookfield Drive was developed for a house. They pointed out that when the owners of this lot applied for a permit for soil testing their wetlands consultant said trees were only cut with hand tools. This was not the case as chainsaws were used. A perc test was done in an area of fill. There will be a Public Hearing on this matter and Mr. Danila intends to participate. The neighboring property owners are concerned about their property values. One of the IWA commissioners looked at this lot using a computer GIS and was concerned that a house could be built on a lot 100 feet in width with a stream running down the middle of it. Mr. Christensen reported that if this lot is buildable, the designation may have gone back to 1965. He felt it is important to bring up the fact that it is now listed on the town records as an unbuildable lot. Ms. Hardy asked if the commission will allow Mr. Danila to speak for this Commission.

**MOTION (4):** Mr. Beeman moved to authorize Mr. Danila to speak at Inland Wetlands Agency meetings on behalf of the Conservation of Natural Resources Commission concerning the 8 Brookfield Drive development lot. Seconded by Ms. Ashburn. (5-0) Unanimous.

Ms. Heller stated some of the regulations are being ignored.

- b. **Update on Review of Inland Wetland Agency Comments.** Mr. Danila reported Mr. Goeschel stated they are close to finalizing its regulations. The updated regulations should be on the Town website after the Agency finishes its final reviews.
- c. **Update on Hole-in-the-Wall stormwater project.** Mr. Danila reported the Niantic River Watershed Committee has received a grant from Dominion for the repair and renewal of this project. The grant can pay for native plantings and labor. Ms. Heller stated one problem was

not being able to locate the original plans. Mr. Danila agreed to contact Judy Rondeau, former NRWC Coordinator and involved in the initial design and construction, to determine whether or not she has a copy.

- d. **Update on Letter of Support for the Nature Conservancy/CT DEEP Proposal.** Ms. Heller submitted the letter of support to the Nature Conservancy on November 9, 2023. The NOAA grant to improve water management at Rocky Neck State Park is expected to be received in January. If they get the grant, one of the first actions the Nature Conservancy plans to take is to hire a hydrologist to map the water flow and begin consultation with AMTRAK .

## VIII.REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

a. **Communications.** There was no correspondence received.

- b. **Agribusiness Subcommittee.** Mr. Christensen reported the Subcommittee members will hold an informational program on agriculture at the Junior High. The students can participate in a tour of Ledyard High School Vo-Ag in January. The Agribusiness Subcommittee wishes to develop interest from youth in agriculture. The Agribusiness Subcommittee may work with the Brookside Farm Museum.

The Preservationist's Potluck Supper will be held on Saturday, January 13 at 5:30 p.m. at Niantic Community Church with Sunday as a bad weather date.

- c. **Sustainable CT Subcommittee.** The Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources SustainableCT Subcommittee (Ms. Ashburn, Mr. Beeman and Ms. Heller) met on December 5 to plan for 2024. It was decided that the upcoming year would be best spent completing actions for "Climate Leader Certification" as an extension of the Town's Bronze Certification. The subcommittee's ongoing action items, outlined at the last Conservation of Natural Resources Meeting (Bicycle/Pedestrian Audit, Municipal Energy Benchmark and Audit, and Community Compost Program) will all count within the Climate Leader Program. Additionally, the subcommittee will be applying for a Municipal Climate Resiliency Workshop offered by the CT Chapter of the Nature Conservancy in partnership with SustainableCT.
- d. **Pollinator Pathway East Lyme (PPEL).** Ms. Heller reported Ms. Meekhoff received permission from the Town Planner to take \$50 from this Commission's budget for Lydia Pan who will be speaking in January. The \$50 will go to her organization, "Wild Ones". This workshop is the first of four workshops scheduled by this Commission in early 2024.

Landscaping and Buffers. An application to the East Lyme Zoning Commission was submitted for a Text Amendment to the East Lyme Zoning Regulations to amend Section 24 "Site Plan Review Requirements" by adding subsections 24.6 E-1. The Planning Commission found this consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Development.

- e. **Chairman's Report.** Ms. Heller spoke with newly elected Zoning board members Gary Pivo and Nancy Kalal at the December 4<sup>th</sup> Swearing-in Ceremony for East Lyme's newly elected officials. Both indicated they are very interested in working together on issues of mutual interest to both commissions.

Ms. Heller completed her swearing in on December 12<sup>th</sup> at the Town Hall.

- f. **Ex-Officio Report.** Ms. Hardy reported the Board of Selectmen have been working on filling vacancies to various commissions. All boards and commissions have been appointed.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION (5): Ms. Ashburn moved to adjourn the December 13, 2023 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources at 7:45 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Danila. (5-0) Unanimous.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary**