

EAST LYME COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 12, 2024

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

Absent: Steve Dinsmore, Alternate
Laura Ashburn

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
EAST LYME CT
2024 JUN 17 P 1:35
Cathy Mitchell
TOWN CLERK

Also Present: Rose Ann Hardy, Ex officio

I. CALL TO ORDER. Ms. Heller, Chair, called the June 12, 2024 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

II. SEATING ALTERNATES (IF NECESSARY)

III. CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA. There were no additions to the Agenda.

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

V. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF May 8, 2024. Ms. Heller asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the May 8, 2024 Minutes. The following correction was noted: On page 4 the vote of Motion 3 is changed to 5-0.

MOTION (1): Mr. Christensen moved to approve the May 8, 2024 Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources Regular Meeting Minutes, as amended. Seconded by Mr. Beeman. (4-0) Unanimous.

VI. NEW BUSINESS There was no discussion of new business.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Affordable Housing Development – 91 Boston Post Road.** Mr. Danila reported he attended the June Zoning Commission (ZC) meeting. There were some new developments. A Conceptual Site Plan was submitted. The applicants will still need to submit a Final Site Plan. This project will be reviewed by the ZC and perhaps Inland Wetlands. A ZC Public Hearing will be held on July 20, 2024. The applicants brought in a Wetlands Consultant. They had a new map that showed a considerable amount of property as open space. There were questions on traffic and the septic system. Mr. Danila plans to attend the July 20th ZC Public Hearing.

Ms. Hardy reported there were condominiums in the town that were for sale and then changed to rentals. The Board of Selectmen are discussing short-term rentals. Mr. Danila stated they must go through regulatory rules.

Ms. Meekhoff joined the meeting.

MOTION (2): Mr. Danila moved to seat Marjorie Meekhoff for Laura Ashburn. Seconded by Mr. Beeman. (4-0) Unanimous.

- b. Update on the Hole-in-the-Wall Stormwater Demonstration Project.** Mr. Danila reported three options were discussed at the last Niantic River Watershed Committee (NRWC) meeting: 1) the need to replace pavers. The NRWC can pay for 18' of new pavers with its \$9,600 grant, (2) The Town might be able to match some or all of the funding; 3) the NRWC can hire a landscaper to remove shrubs and clean up the area. Ms. Meekhoff suggested not establishing any new beds. There were tagged vegetation in the area. She suggested a Site Walk. Mr. Danila suggested that Ms. Meekhoff meet with NRWC members involved with this project. She stated the mugwort is helping to control erosion. Jen Uber did not feel herbicides should be used because the area is too close to the water.

VIII.REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Communications.** No new correspondence was received.
- b. Agribusiness Subcommittee.** Mr. Christensen reported there was a Tractor Show at the Samuel Smith Farmstead last weekend. Radio channel 94.9 gave free advertising. There were five tractors and five cars or trucks. There were 127 individuals attending. Mr. Dinsmore donated honey and a member made bird houses for sale. Some individuals rented garden plots. By selling honey, bird houses and the rental of garden plots about \$700 was earned.

Normally there is a Farm Day in July. This year it will be in the fall as July is too hot for the animals.

Besides meeting at East Lyme High School, the Agribusiness Subcommittee has also been convening at the Brookside Farm Museum a few times a year at the invitation of its Curator Annah Perch. Agribusiness Subcommittee agendas and minutes are posted on the town website under the Conservation of Natural Resources' tab.

- c. SustainableCT Subcommittee.** Ms. Heller reported she attended the Planning Commission Meeting last night and presented the Complete Streets' Policy document which discussed sidewalks, bike racks and a Pedestrian Safety Parking Plan. The meeting went well and the Policy was adopted by unanimous vote, even though some individuals felt it didn't go far enough. Ms. Heller would like to have discussions with Alex Klose and a representative from Parks and Recreation to start

implementation of this policy, such as a grant for bike racks. She would like to speak to the police about safety for bikers. (See attached Complete Street Policy Statement).

Ms. Heller informed the Commission that Ms. Ashburn is working with a teacher on community composting at the High School. They have a suggested budget of \$6,000. However, the project could be done for less as there are many companies that will take the organic compost for nominal fees and sell it.

- d. **Pollinator Pathways East Lyme (PPEL).** Ms. Meekhoff contacted the Main Street Group about meeting with them to discuss invasives on Main Street but to date has not heard back from them.

Ms. Meekhoff reported the Darrow Pond Subcommittee scheduled a meeting but there was a lack of a quorum and it was cancelled. Some homeowners who live near vacant properties stated invasives are going into their yard.

The PPEL group met at Smith Acres on June 11 to discuss native plantings.

Mr. Christensen contacted Rep. Holly Cheeseman regarding invasive species. She gave him information on the Aquatic Invasive Species Grant Program.

- e. **Chairman's Report.** Ms. Heller asked that this Commission be involved with the Hathaway property. Ms. Heller reported that she looked into applying for an environmental review of the newly acquired Hathaway reserve once transfer of the property to the town is completed. The CT DEEP offers free of charge to any town the services of an Environmental Review Team (ERT). The ERT can provide non-regulatory natural resource and planning information, including grant writing guidance.
- f. **Ex-Officio Report.** Ms. Hardy reported the Town received an extensive report from the Yale Charette Committee. Suggestions for the old Police Building was to use it as a train station or for two-level parking garage. An environmental review showed the building is not habitable. It contains mold and the cost of remediation is questionable. There was discussion on a bike rack and walking path. However, 156 is a state road.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION (3): Mr. Danila moved to adjourn the June 12, 2024 East Lyme Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources at 8:35 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Christensen. (5-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary

East Lyme Planning Commission 'Complete Street' Policy Statement

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to enable the streets of East Lyme to provide safe, convenient, and comfortable routes for walking, bicycling, and public transportation that encourage increased use of these modes of transportation, enable convenient travel as part of daily activities and meet the needs of all users of the streets, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities. Further, it is the intent of the Town of East Lyme Planning Commission in enacting this policy to encourage healthy, active living, reduce traffic congestion and fossil fuel use, and improve the safety and quality of life of residents of East Lyme by providing safe, convenient, and comfortable routes and connections for walking, bicycling, and public transportation.

POLICY

It is hereby the policy of the Town of East Lyme to consider the needs of all users of all abilities and ages (specifically including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and vehicle operators) in the planning, design, construction, retrofit and maintenance activities related to all roads and streets as a means of providing a safe, efficient transportation network which enhances quality of life and economic vitality. Complete Streets shall be defined as, for the purposes of this policy, a means to provide safe access for all users by providing a comprehensive, integrated, connected multi-modal network of transportation options.

JUSTIFICATION

The Connecticut General Statutes state that “accommodations for all users shall be a routine part of the planning, design, constructing and operating activities of all highways in this state (Section 13a-15f). Section 14i-300(a) goes on to define a ‘user’ with the following inclusive list:

“(A) A pedestrian;(B) a highway worker; (C) a person riding or driving an animal; (D) a person riding a bicycle; (E) a person using a skateboard, roller skates or in-line skates; (F) a person operating or riding on an agricultural tractor; (G) a person using a wheelchair or motorized-chair; and (H) a blind person and such person's service animal.”

The 2024 East Lyme Plan of Conservation and Development recommendations include promotion of multi-modal forms of transportation and creation of safe sidewalk and bike lane systems (Section 14.5, p 111). Recommendations go on to include evaluation of the need to implement traffic calming techniques and investigate forming a Traffic Calming process for the town because speeding is consistently the most common traffic complaint in town. All commercial areas within East Lyme require installation of traffic calming techniques, and downtown Niantic was identified as a critical area. Several means of calming traffic are available: Narrow driving lanes to encourage automobiles to drive slowly; install street trees to provide the illusion of narrower travel lanes; more clearly identify areas of parking from travel lane(s) to provide a buffer for pedestrians from moving automobiles; install traffic calming “road art” in key locations to slow traffic.

IMPLEMENTATION

Complete Streets may include facilities and amenities, including but not limited to, pavement markings and signs; sidewalks and pedestrian safety improvements such as medians, curb extensions and crosswalks; ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible curb ramps and accessible pedestrian signals; transit shelters and signage and improved pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stops and stations; bicycle detection at intersections and wide travel lanes, bike lanes, or shared use lanes; bicycle parking facilities; street trees, landscaping, street lighting, street furniture; and adequate drainage facilities, including opportunities for storm water quality treatment facilities. .

By implementing a Complete Streets Policy, the Town of East Lyme will set a legal and funding precedent to begin to create a transportation system that accommodates all users in a safe and practical manner. Planning and design should consider all potential modes of transportation in their development. The concept is to provide, where practical, pedestrian and bicycle friendly connections between neighborhoods, key commercial areas, transit stops, bike routes, greenways and trails, recreational areas, schools, points of interest, and village centers. Also, consider a transit service between destinations as demand and need dictates to provide options for all residents. Limited resources, both in funding and land, means that these uses must coexist in the same general space.