

Subject to Approval

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 8, 2021, 7:30 P.M.
ZOOM MEETING ~ MADISON TOWN CAMPUS**

Minutes of the Meeting of March 8, 2021, 7:30 p.m. – Zoom Public Participation Meeting with publicly posted information giving the webinar link password, telephone call in number and webinar identification number.

Members present: Chairman Heather Crawford, Vice Chairman Christine Bouchard, Secretary Alex Cushing, Danielle Butsch, and Shannon Lewis.

Members absent: None.

Others present: Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson and Daniel Hand High School Environmental Club Student Commissioners Marina Dixon and Elizabeth Ozimek.

1. **Call the meeting to order:** Chairman Heather Crawford called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.
2. **Welcome new member Sufia Uddin:** Chairman Crawford and the commissioners welcomed new Commissioner Sufia Uddin, who will be sworn into office in the near future.
3. **Review and approve minutes for Feb. 22, 2021 meeting as submitted:** Vice Chairman Christine Bouchard stated that the name of the documentary should be changed to read *The Biggest Little Farm*.

Secretary Alex Cushing made the motion to approve the Feb. 22, 2021 minutes as amended, changing the name of the documentary to the correct, *The Biggest Little Farm*; it was seconded by Commissioner Shannon Lewis and unanimously approved.

Vote to approve the Feb. 22, 2021 minutes as amended passed, 5-0-0.

IN FAVOR: Chairman Crawford, Vice Chairman Bouchard, Secretary Cushing, and Commissioners Danielle Butsch and Shannon Lewis.

OPPOSED: None.

ABSTAINED: None.

4. **Call for additional agenda items:** Chairman Crawford added the agenda item Welcome New Member, above.
 5. **Continue discussion on subdivision application 20-16+CSP Longshore Lane:** Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson stated that the application has been before the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency, which has submitted its referral report to the Planning and Zoning Commission. The application returns to the continued public hearing of the Planning and Zoning Commission at its next meeting; letters have been submitted by the Conservation Commission, the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and an intervener in opposition to the application has hired consultants who have issued letters, including a 40-page report written Soil Scientist George Logan; also involved on the intervener side is Engineer Steve Trinkaus, as well as a team of lawyers. Chairman Crawford asked whether the commissioners believe anything else should be
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included in its letter—the property is 70 percent tidal and inland wetlands, and plans are to put five houses on it. It’s been a discussion for over a decade, she stated. Plans are to fill the land to raise the houses, but it is not going to keep the people out of jeopardy, Chairman Crawford stated, adding that she finds this application to be environmentally insensitive. The Planning and Zoning Commission meeting is a public hearing, so if the Conservation Commission wants to speak, then it may, Mr. Anderson stated.

6. **Discuss potential input on applications for 856 Boston Post Road and 110&114 Bradley Road relative to Inland Wetlands Agency and Planning and Zoning Commission:** The application for 856 Boston Post Road has gone to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency, and it has been continued. With the Inland Wetlands Agency, it will be interesting to see how that turns out on the southeast corner, Chairman Crawford stated. It has to be decided whether, when the application goes before the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Conservation Commission wants to address the tidal wetlands issue, unless the Conservation Commission’s concern is also the density of the site, along with the number of septic systems, according to Chairman Crawford. The proposal is a condominium development, so it does not trigger an open easement, according to Mr. Anderson. Chairman Crawford asked the commissioners if they have any feelings as to what they might want to say, in reference to the application. Vice Chairman Bouchard stated that she has some concerns about taking one building and turning it into seven houses, with all the septic; also the bedrock is her concern. It is a really complicated proposal, Vice Chairman Bouchard stated. They did end up saying they’ll have to blast a little bit, Chairman Crawford stated. It kind of seems most of that bedrock will be gone, Vice Chairman Bouchard stated. Another issue that came up is just the run-off, in general, Commissioner Shannon Lewis stated. The initial public hearing is next week at the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, and then it will be continued, so that the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency can hear it, Mr. Anderson stated. On the one hand, Chairman Crawford stated that she is thinking she would rather have five new units of housing and have it in-filled; she is also concerned about the septic system being located that close to the creek, as well as what the blasting of the bedrock will do. There has got to be a way to protect; there is going to be a lot of septic going into that area of town, with The General’s Residence on the other corner of the street, according to Chairman Crawford. Vice Chairman Bouchard stated that she is interested in hearing about that other wetland they identified. It will be interesting to see what Inland Wetlands says; they may have to reapply, Commissioner Lewis stated. Chairman Crawford stated that she will put together a draft letter between now and the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, then watch the meeting, and at the next Conservation Commission meeting, the commissioners can discuss what else may need to be put into the letter. Regarding 110 and 114 Bradley Road, it is a 24-unit apartment building, according to Chairman Crawford. It has Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency approval, Mr. Anderson stated, and the application is going for a special permit, which will be heard by the Planning and Zoning Commission in April. It is very dense, but the Conservation Commission would be happy to hear what they have to say about being so close to the Tuxis Pond, Chairman Crawford stated, adding that she would like to be able to have Professional Engineer Michael Harkin present at the Conservation Commission’s meeting. Mr. Anderson is expected to arrange that. Mr. Anderson also stated that there is an attendee present who has raised a hand; Chairman Crawford invited the attendee to speak. Attendee Shelley Farmer stated that she sent a letter to the Conservation Commission town website with concerns about this development; they are property owners who abut The Ledges. Her issue is the relocation of wildlife on her property—deer, fox, owl, red tail hawks, bobcats, and coyotes—and they are very concerned about what will happen to all the wildlife when trees are taken down. Ms. Farmer stated that the reason so much wildlife is on her property is because they have been dislodged from elsewhere; they enjoy the wildlife; it is a wonderful piece of heaven. The blasting and construction are going to make the wildlife move away from her property, she stated. Chairman Crawford and Vice Chairman Bouchard stated that they will both look for her letter. Two weeks from now, the Conservation

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Commission will look at 856 Boston Post Road, and then on April 12th, the first meeting in April, the Conservation Commission will have Mr. Harkin speak about Bradley Road, Chairman Crawford stated.

7. **Discuss Sustainable CT and Madison efforts with Town Planner:** Sustainable Connecticut is run out of Eastern Connecticut State College; it is a volunteer state certification program where towns are awarded points for sustainable efforts, leading to Bronze and Silver status, according to Mr. Anderson. The last time, Madison earned the Bronze Certification, which is good for three years, but that certification is lapsing this year, and Mr. Anderson stated that he would like to suggest the possibility of the Conservation Commission coordinating the town's effort. The Conservation Commission can decide how to handle the program—either distribute the work to other organizations or ask individuals to assist, according to Mr. Anderson. Once it is determined how the work should be accomplished, it can be compiled into a submittal, according to Mr. Anderson, who stated that he is a big advocate of that program because it shows how sustainable links through all government programs and towns are taking place, and he believes it is a really successful program. So, distributing the workload seems the most manageable way to do the program, Mr. Anderson stated. There are actions set out for each Sustainable Connecticut cycle, and the information is available on its website; the Conservation Commission could look at the list to see the amount of points, as well as what other towns have done, according to Mr. Anderson. Sustainable Connecticut is really about trying to do the right thing for the town and the environment, according to Mr. Anderson. Commissioner Lewis stated that it has such a distinct path of actions that the town could do; she understands it is a very big undertaking, but she is in favor of it. Mr. Anderson suggested that they try for the fall entry, due in November; a fall certification is reasonable. The town of Guilford made a Sustainable Connecticut Committee, Mr. Anderson stated. Just staff driven to complete the certification program is not successful; but a group working toward the certification would be better, according to Mr. Anderson. Vice Chairman Bouchard stated that it is important to know that the Conservation Commission is supported with it; the last time, it was hard to find people to help. Mr. Anderson stated that he has requested an environmental planner for the town budget, and if it passes, it will be really helpful. Chairman Crawford stated that the town is experiencing turnover and retirements, and this reorganization might make the process difficult. Mr. Anderson stated that he will work with Chairman Crawford to discuss the Sustainable Connecticut program with First Selectwoman Peggy Lyons; he believes they will be able to engage people in the community with the program.

8. **Discuss ongoing projects/issues; plans for 2021:**

a. **Dark Skies education and regulation** ~ Dark Skies program is April 11, 2021 to April 17, 2021, Chairman Crawford stated, adding she hopes to get this information on the town calendars in the local newspapers. She also plans to write a note to the reporter about the possibility of a story. They will have the banner displayed, according to Chairman Crawford. It's been found that there are towns that have lighting regulations which divide communities into zones, to modulate the amount of lighting, for instance in areas of conservation land, and the regulations also includes doing light surveys on properties. Chairman Crawford asked the Daniel Hand High School student commissioners if the Environmental Club might be willing to ask their members to take the surveys into various neighborhoods to see if it is useful. The survey is digital. Mr. Anderson stated that one of the actions on Sustainable Connecticut is to promote Dark Skies, so they should look into that, to see what Madison could do.

b. **Anti-idling campaign** ~ There is a state statute requiring that cars should not be in park and kept running for more than three minutes, according to Chairman Crawford. The problem seems to be that the pick-up areas are designed to encourage the idling, for instance, at the schools, according to Commissioner Lewis. She wondered if parking could be made available, rather than having the lines of

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cars idling. There is a sign at Ryerson School asking that cars not be kept idling, according to Chairman Crawford, but the signs should perhaps be larger or more colorful. Cars idling are also a problem at East Wharf and West Wharf, Chairman Crawford stated. Though Mr. Anderson stated that he didn't see anything in Sustainable Connecticut about cars idling, Chairman Crawford stated that credit is given for towns creating their own ideas, as well. Chairman Crawford stated she'll get in touch with Sharon Gold and talk to her, officially, about doing this anti-idling campaign for Sustainable Connecticut.

c. Invasive species ~ Chairman Crawford stated that with the advent of spring, she would like to write letters to the editors reminding people that this is a perfect time to be looking for invasive species. Videos are available on the Conservation Commission website: the invasive plants video is in the plant section. Vice Chairman Bouchard stated that the Dark Skies presentation could go into the earth section; composting could go into *My Green Home*; and storm waters could also go into the earth section. Chairman Crawford asked Commissioner Lewis if she could assist with the technical aspects; they could work together with the town website person. Madison has a YouTube channel, Vice Chairman Bouchard stated, but Chairman Crawford cautioned against this, because she has learned that once something is put on YouTube, then YouTube takes ownership of it, and she is not comfortable with that.

d. Community outreach ~ Discussed above, with letters to the editor, writing to reporters for stories, and hoping to place announcements in community calendars.

e. Others ~ It is uncertain whether there will be a Green Up Clean Up Day this year. Mr. Anderson stated that it can be added to the conversation they plan to have with the first selectwoman.

9. **Update from student representatives:** The Environmental Club will start talking about Earth Day next week, stated Daniel Hand High School Student Commissioner Marian Dixon. The pollinator pathway has been pushed off for a little while longer, due to Covid, stated Daniel Hand High School Student Commissioner Elizabeth Ozimek.

10. **Adjourn**

Vice Chairman Bouchard made the motion to adjourn at 8:40 p.m.; it was seconded by Secretary Cushing and unanimously approved.

Vote to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. passed, 5-0-0.

IN FAVOR: Chairman Crawford, Vice Chairman Bouchard, Secretary Cushing, and Commissioners Butsch and Lewis.

OPPOSED: None.

ABSTAINED: None.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlene H. Kennedy