

Commission on Conservation & Agriculture



Chairperson	Elisabeth Holder ('22)	
Vice-Chair	Brian Gartner ('23)	
Members	Michael Thomas ('20)	Kate Miller ('23)
	Jane Brawerman ('23)	James Miller ('23)
	Katharine Owens ('22)	Bob Daniels ('22)
	Barbara Schukoske ('23)	David Bauer ('22)
	Vacant	
Alternates	Ellen Lukens ('23)	Judy Konopka ('22)
Staff	Marek Kozikowski, AICP, City Planner	

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, February 16, 2021
TIME: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting was held online. Public Access was provide by:

1. Going to <https://webex.com> and joining the meeting using the appropriate meeting number and password
2. Launching the WebEx application and joining the meeting using the appropriate meeting number and password
3. Via telephone at 1-408-418-9388 and the appropriate access code
Meeting Number/Access Code: 1799170976
Event Password: Conservation

In attendance: Commissioners Elisabeth Holder, Brian Gartner, Michael Thomas, Bob Daniels, James Miller, Jane Brawerman, Katherine Owens, and Judy Konopka. Marek Kozikowski, City Planner.

Public In attendance: Donna Drouin.

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm.

B. Election of Officers

A motion to elect E. Holder as Chair was made by J. Brawerman and seconded by K. Owens passed 6-0; E. E Holder abstained.

A motion to elect B. Gartner as Vice Chair was made by J. Brawerman and seconded by B. Daniels passed unanimously.

A motion to elect M. Kozikowski (staff) as secretary was made by E. Holder and seconded by J. Brawerman passed unanimously.

C. Accept the Agenda

A motion to accept the agenda was made by B. Gartner and seconded by E. Lukens passed unanimously.

D. Public Forum

Donna Drouin noted that a site visit has been scheduled to view the Sunshine Realty property and requested that it be postponed until a time that she could attend.

E. Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of Minutes from the January 11, 2021 Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2021 meeting made by B. Gartner and seconded by M. Thomas passed 6-0; E. Lukens abstained.

F. Request for Comment

None

G. Officers and Committee Reports

1. Chairman's Report

i. NRG update

E. Holder reported that there was a workshop at Common Council on the NRG turbine situation. John Hall and Brian Stewart represented "one side" and NRG reps were there also. The tax abatement is still on the table.

J. Brawerman represented that it was well attended and most of the people from the community opposed the upgrade of the plant raising issues of climate change, environmental justice, and other alternative sources of energy. The workshop was recorded and if anyone is interested it can be listened to. NRG's presentation claimed that emissions would be reduced and air quality will be improved. This is questionable since the turbines will be run all the time and would therefore increase emissions and reduce the air quality. She noted that the City already has an air quality issue.

M. Thomas represented that he was also at the workshop and he was hopeful because the Council was more interested in the energy storage facility than the turbine.

K. Owens emailed comments but was not at the meeting.

The Commission discussed contents of a statement by the Commission to the Council. The Commission agreed by consensus to send the Council the following statement:

Statement: In view of our purview to look after natural resources in Middletown, we're dismayed that a pollution-increasing installation is being considered. We hope the common council will follow/be consistent with the climate emergency declaration by opposing this measure and removing the tax rebate for fossil fuel production.

ii. Climate emergency input

H. Holder reported that the Mayor has set up a group to implement the necessary steps for addressing the climate emergency. The group is using the Sustainable CT framework as a base for the effort. The effort is in its early stages. She sent in a list of action items to this effort that mostly addressed the Open Space Stewardship and education and engagement. This will be an ongoing effort working with this group.

iv. 2020 annual report

H. Holder circulated the draft annual report to the Commission for review. A motion to approve the 2020 annual report made by B. Daniels and seconded by B. Gartner passed unanimously.

ii. 2021 goals

A motion to approve the 2021 goals made by J. Miller and seconded by K. Owens passed unanimously.

B. Gartner shared a list of goals action items related to the outreach and efforts. This will be discussed in March as and implementation plan.

2. Trails Committee

i. Update on trail work

H. Holder reported that the consultant from the happening at the water tower asked if the trail should now be rerouted but that work was already completed by the committee.

Next effort should be the trail work and mapping trails at Hubbard.

ii. ATV destruction and possible deterrents

No update.

3. Agriculture Committee

i. Farm survey working group

B. Daniels reported he and the group has drafted and reviewed a letter to the Mayor and the Council to outline concerns from the agricultural committee and request a meeting to discuss.

ii. Letter to City officials

M. Kozikowski will assist in coordinating a meeting with City officials upon sending the letter. Furthermore, he will reach out to officials in Haddam to explore programs they offer for farmers.

4. Outreach Committee

i. Trails maps updates and publicity

K. Owens reported that she drafted an article about hiking and the Middletown trails and sent it to the Middletown Press.

M. Kozikowski that the Trail Guide is shown on the front page of the city website as a spotlight item.

J. Konopka is seeking GIS trail data for our trails. M. Kozikowski isn't sure that the maps in the trail guide were created with GIS but he would search the records.

The Commission discussed opportunities to use GPS tracking on phones.

ii. Other publicity

B. Gartner noted that he will send around his list of activities for discussion next meeting.

5. Open Space Management Committee

No update.

6. Open Space Acquisition Committee

i. Pending Properties (Livingston, Newfield, Mckiernan, Sunshine Realty)

M. Kozikowski reported that the City has closed on the Livingston property and it is now City Property. The Newfield Street property was sold to a private developer. The Planning and Zoning Commission and Economic Development Commission both approved the donation and the City is working on obtaining a title search on the property. The City has hired an appraiser for the Sunshine Realty property and the appraiser is in the process of appraising the property.

ii. South Plumb Road

M. Kozikowski reported that we received the appraisal and negotiated and offer of \$725K. The Planning and Zoning Commission and Economic Development Commission both approved the acquisition. A discussion ensued about the property and its proximity to Smith Park.

A motion to move forward with the acquisition at the negotiated price made by J. Miller seconded by J. Konopka passes unanimously.

ii. Westlake Drive

M. Kozikowski reported that the city obtained an appraisal and through the mayor made an offer on the property.

ii. OSWA Grant- Majestic Oaks- Wilson Property Update

M. Kozikowski reported that he anticipates receiving news about the grant awards within the next few weeks.

ii. Arbutus Street- Hutton Property

The open space committee visited the property to complete the scoring. The property won't be pursued as a priority at this point.

G. Old Business

1. Timber Management and Southern Border Safety

E. Lukens inquired about moving forward with pursuing a conservation easement over the red maple swamp at Lawrence school using the materials that were included in the public record. M. Kozikowski noted that a revised survey of any sort of conservation area over the land. E. Lukens and L. Holder will continue to move forward.

H. New Business

None

I. Member Forum

J. Brawerman reported that she met with One Tree Planted along with other conservation districts in the state to discuss possible tree planting projects in Connecticut They discussed street trees and possible rewilding projects.

J. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn made by B. Daniels and seconded by B. Gartner passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:34pm.