



**CITY OF TORRINGTON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
November 28, 2023 Special Meeting**

1. Call to Order:

Meeting called to order at 6:33 pm

Members present in person in Room 215 of Torrington City Hall unless otherwise noted.

Roll Call & Announcements: Members Present: Christine Altman (Chair), Steve Ivain (Vice-Chair), Dan McGuinness, Karen Svetz, Jeremy Spitz, George Craig, and Erin Stelma
Members Absent: Michael Kaneb
Staff: Nate Nardi-Cyrus – Assistant City Planner
Members of the public: None

2. Minutes:

a. October 19, 2023 Regular Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Ivain, seconded by Ms. Stelma. All commissioners voted aye.

3. New Business:

a. Elect Vice-Chair and Secretary

Added to agenda by 2/3 vote – motion by Mr. Craig, seconded by Mr. Ivain. Mr. Ivain stated he was honored to have served as vice-chair for one month and appreciated the role. He cannot serve on the Conservation Commission in his role as a newly elected City Council Member. Ms. Stelma nominated Mr. McGuinness as Vice-Chair and all voted aye to elect him to the position. Ms. Stelma nominated herself for the role of secretary and all voted aye to elect her to that position.

4. Old Business

a. Landscaping zoning regulation update

Mr. Nardi-Cyrus shared a revised draft update to the City of Torrington's landscaping regulations, which would require the use of native tree and shrubs vs recommending them, among other minor language tweaks. After the prior meeting's lengthy discussion about pros and cons of this amendment, Mr. Nardi-Cyrus offered to investigate cost comparisons between native and non-native tree species and bring a plan set into the meeting for discussion. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus brought the promised materials to this meeting and another discussion ensued, regarding the imposition of landscaping regulations in general and the amendment specifically and how that would affect small business owners. After a lengthy dialog, the amended revisions were again stated, which include:

- Updates to the ‘Purpose and Intent’ to include other benefits of trees in the landscape
- Requiring the use of plants native to the Northeast US (subsequently changed to United States by Assistant Planner)
- Eliminating the requirement of applicants to remove invasive plants in undeveloped portions of the property.
- Updating what organization can define invasive species
- Allowing municipal tree wardens, in addition to arborists, to define tree protection zones
- Exempting farms and farm stands from all landscaping regulations
- During the enforcement of violations, allowing the commission to require the planting of the largest commercially available species.

Ms. Altman called for a motion of support for these changes, which was provided by Mr. Craig with a second from Mr. Ivain. The vote was as follows:

- Ms. Altman, aye
- Ms. Svetz, aye
- Mr. Ivain, aye
- Mr. Craig, aye
- Ms. Stelma, nay
- Mr. Spitz, nay.

Motion carries.

b. Eastside Flooding Issues

Mr. Nardi-Cyrus reviewed the issue with the Commission and discussion ensued. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus requested the commission review a draft landowner letter to provide comment. Major comments included:

- Adding the effect of impervious surface to flooding issues
- Move “record rainfall” paragraph to end of document and indicate it will be getting worse.
- Elaborate on the City’s efforts to secure infrastructure and planning funds

Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will update the document and circulate to the Commission for another round of review. Commissioners indicated they would be willing to stuff envelopes during the next meeting.

c. Staff updates:

- i. HVA wildlife crossing assessment training – scheduled for April 6th, 2024
- ii. Food Forest Planning – a site walk at Bannon Street Park and Borzani Park with the Parks Department is scheduled for early December. Commissioners are invited to attend.
- iii. Red Mountain Trail – Homeless encampments have returned since the September cleanup. There is a site visit planned for the City Staff and SLR on December 5th to discuss grant implementation.
- iv. Open Space Inventory – Mr. Nardi-Cyrus, Ms. Stelma, Mr. Ivain, and Ms. Altman visited two properties to make assessments. The next visits will be scheduled in 2024.
- v. Natural Resources Inventory - Nothing new to report.

5. Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ivain, seconded by Ms. Svetz. All commissioners voted aye.

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm.

Nate Nardi-Cyrus

Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Assistant City Planner
Staff to Conservation Commission