

# City Of Torrington

LAND USE DEPARTMENT  
(860) 489-2221  
Fax: (860) 496-5928



140 Main Street • City Hall  
Torrington, CT 06790-5245

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## MEMORANDUM

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TO:

Mayor Carbone and City Council

CC:

Conservation Commission

FROM:

Nate Nardi-Cyrus – Assistant City Planner

DATE:

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

File

RE:

**Conservation Commission  
2023 Annual Report**

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☐ URGENT

☐ FOR REVIEW

☐ PLEASE COMMENT

☐ FOR YOUR USE

☐ PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

Mayor Carbone and City Council Members:

The governing state statute for the creation of municipal Conservation Commissions, C.G.S. Section 7-131a(b), states that the Commission “shall make an annual report to the municipality” on the activities of the Commission. The Commission respectfully submits this report as a summary of the activities conducted by the Torrington Conservation Commission in calendar year 2023:

State statutes list *required* duties and *optional* duties governing municipal Conservation Commissions:

Conservation Commissions shall:

1. Keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands, for the purpose of obtaining information on the proper use of such areas
2. Conduct research into the utilization and possible utilization of land areas of the municipality
3. Administer gifts in the name of the municipality for the commission's purposes subject to the terms of the gift
4. Approve, prior to submission, state grant-in-aid applications for programs to preserve or restrict the use of open space land to conservation or recreation purposes
5. Keep records of its meetings and activities and shall make an annual report to the municipality in the manner required of other municipal agencies.

Conservation commissions are also *permitted*, but *not required*, to perform the following:

1. Make recommendations on proposed land use changes to zoning commissions, planning commissions, inland wetlands agencies and other municipal agencies
2. Recommend plans and programs for the development and use of all open space areas to the planning commission (or if none, to the chief executive officer or the legislative body)
3. Exchange information with the Commissioner of Environmental Protection
4. Request technical personnel to be assigned to the commission by the Commissioner of Environmental Protection for assistance in planning its overall program and for coordinating state and local conservation activities
5. Coordinate the activities of non-government bodies (volunteers, etc.) organized for the purpose of conducting land use research
6. Advertise, prepare, and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets necessary for its purposes
7. Inventory natural resources and formulate watershed management and drought management plans
8. Acquire land and easements in the name of the municipality, with the approval of the legislative body
9. Promulgate rules and regulations, such as the establishment of reasonable charges for the use of land and easements, for any of its purposes
10. Receive gifts in the name of the municipality and administer these gifts for such purposes subject to the terms of the gift
11. Apply, if the municipality so designates, for state grant-in-aid of a program to preserve or restrict to conservation or recreation purposes the use of open space
12. Supervise and manage municipally owned open space or park property when the agency normally responsible for such duties delegates that power.

With these required and optional duties in mind, the Torrington Conservation Commission engaged in the following activities in calendar year 2023:

1. The commission **continued to conduct inventory and field inspections of the approximately 60 city owned open space parcels.** The commission intends to continue these inspections in 2024 and utilize the information gathered in these property surveys to:
  - a. assess property conditions and distinguish between high value conservation property and those that may be utilized for other recreational purposes (park, playgrounds, community gardens, etc.) or transfer to a private individual or organization.
  - b. make preliminary assessments of properties for potential ecological/biological value for future management decisions, including further review by qualified professionals
  - c. gather preliminary data for possible use in a future City Open Space Plan to expand on information included in the current city Plan of Conservation and Development
  - d. document and discuss enforcement options for property encroachments by abutting property owners into City open space parcels

2. City staff and commissioners also **reviewed conservation related bills** before the CT Legislature and discussed when appropriate at meetings for potential comment directly from the commission or through professional organizations representing municipal conservation commissions
3. Event coordination and outreach with residents at City cleanup events including the **Earth Day cleanup event in April and Clean Up the World Day in September. The spring 2023 event drew approximately 34 volunteers and the fall event around 22.**
4. **Planning for the installation public fruit orchard**, with a tentative plan for installation at the Bannon Street Municipal Park.
5. **Assisted the City in working toward Silver status** as a part of the Sustainable CT certification program
6. Drafted a mailing for east end property owners affected by Summer 2023 flooding issues to **help increase community stewardship of watercourses as a flood mitigation strategy.**
7. Helped draft an **amendment to the City of Torrington Zoning Code's landscaping subsection.**
8. Continued compiling a **Natural Resources Inventory web mapper**, to aid in conservation analysis and as an educational resource to the public.
9. The Conservation Commission commented on site plan updates to the **Torrington Fair Plaza and Red Mountain Trail grant application**

For calendar year 2024, the Conservation Commission will:

1. Complete **open space parcel reviews and review data**
2. Finalize the **Natural Resources Inventory** web mapper and post to website
3. Continue communication with Corporation Counsel on **open space encroachment issues**
4. Monitor for grant funding sources to develop a full **City Open Space Plan**
5. Apply for grant funding to develop city-owned portions of the **Sue Grossman and Naugatuck river Greenway Trail.**
6. Continue to organize, coordinate and promote spring and fall city wide cleanup events for **Earth Day (April) and Clean Up the World Day (September)**
7. Begin review and cataloguing of **City conservation easements** on private property
8. **Review development applications** to other boards and commissions as needed involving open space or other conservation issues
9. Continue **floodings-related outreach to private landowners and associated planning efforts**
10. **Continue to develop public fruit orchards** in various parts of the City
11. **Continue coordination with outside groups** (Torrington Trails Network, Heritage Land Trust, etc.) on projects as needed
12. Coordinate with public works to **better plan for and manage urban and rural forests**
13. Plan and host **educational trainings and environmental group coordination meetings** periodically throughout the year.
14. Explore local models for **municipal food waste recycling.**
15. **Research grants** as alternative funding sources to achieve the Commission's goals.