

# City Of Torrington

LAND USE DEPARTMENT  
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## MEMORANDUM

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TO: Mayor Carbone and City Council

CC: Martin Connor, City Planner

FROM: Jeremy Leifert – Asst. City Planner *JL*

Conservation Commission

DATE: DECEMBER 9, 2021

File

RE: Conservation Commission – 2021 Annual Report

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URGENT     FOR REVIEW     PLEASE COMMENT     FOR YOUR USE     PLEASE RECYCLE

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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 2021:

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 2021:

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 2022 and utilize to 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.)
  - 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. Staff and commissioners discussed and reviewed information for recommendations on acquisition of privately owned parcels for protected open space. Specific to 2021 was the acquisition of the Leoni property on Winsted Road/Machuga Road.
4. 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 2021 event drew approximately 80-90 volunteers and the fall event around 30.
5. Property walks and discussion for development of “food forest” community gardens for the use of City Residents.
6. Conducted meetings and discussions with both the developers (Silicon Ranch) and abutting property owners of the proposed solar project off of Highland Avenue and Rossi Road for conservation concerns and possible open space donation.

For calendar year 2022, the Conservation Commission will:

1. Continue with and possibly complete open space parcel reviews
2. Continue communication with Corporation Counsel on open space encroachment issues
3. Monitor for grant funding sources to develop a full City Open Space Plan
4. Continue to organize, coordinate and promote spring and fall city wide cleanup events for Earth Day (April) and Clean Up the World Day (September)
5. Begin review and cataloging of City conservation easements on private property
6. Review development applications to other boards and commissions as needed involving open space or other conservation issues
7. Continue communications with private landowners for new open space parcel acquisitions
8. Continue coordination with outside groups (Torrington Trails Network, Heritage Land Trust, etc.) on projects as needed