



**CITY OF TORRINGTON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Special Meeting Minutes
June 29, 2023 Regular Meeting**

1. Call to Order:

Meeting called to order at 6:32 pm

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

Roll Call & Announcements: Members present: Steve Ivain, Dan McGuinness, Erin Stelma, Karen Svetz, and Christine Altman (Chair).
Via ZOOM: None
Members Absent: Michael Kaneb
Staff: Nate Nardi-Cyrus – Assistant City Planner; Tim Nadaskay – Help Desk Technician
Members of the public: Tom Kandefer and Cynthia Rabinowitz

2. Minutes:

a. April 27, 2023 Regular Meeting

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

3. New Business:

a. Food Forest Planning with Northwest Conservation District

Cynthia Rabinowitz, Executive Director of the NWCD, gave a presentation on edible forest gardens and discussed the possibility of creating such sites in Torrington. The Commission shared examples of edible plantings (e.g., fruit trees on university drive and plantings at Bowman gardens) and asked questions about her approach. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus explained the Cook street property, adjacent to Coe Park, could be a good site but there seems to be issues related to its status as City of Torrington land vs being overseen by the Coe Park Trust. The Commission agreed to instead re-explore sites at Borzani or Bannon Street parks but would need permission from Parks and Rec. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will engage with the new parks director to set up a site visit with Commissioners and Ms. Rabinowitz. Once a site is selected the commission will engage the community to recruit maintainers and have Ms. Rabinowitz develop a design with plants available for free from Brett Lehner.

b. Proposed Landscaping Regulation Amendment

Mr. Nardi-Cyrus presented Ms. Svetz's idea about requiring native species to be used in new development via the City's zoning regulations. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus explained that the current regulations, Section 5.11.2A, only encourage the use of native plants. While our staff has had a lot of

success in obligating all applicants to use native plantings, it would be better to have the regulations amended to explicitly require native plant use. Our City Planner is supportive of this idea and will bring the amendment to the Planning and Zoning Commission by the end of the year. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will work on draft language and share with the commission for a vote before formally recommending it to Planning and Zoning.

c. General Discussion of Solar in Torrington

Discussion of approved solar project on Rossi road, including the Siting Council process. Mr. Ivain shared his issues with the Rossi Road application and the process in general. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will ask the City Planner if the window for environmental intervention is closed on the project.

4. Old Business

a. World Clean-up Day Planning

This year the event will be Sept 16th, ideally at the OSJL plaza to focus on Red Mountain Trail clean-up. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus must confirm with OSJL that this will work for them prior to promoting the event. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will create a draft press release and flyer and print for the July 27th meeting. The commission will take a much more active role in getting the word out about the Earth Day and World Clean-up Day, by reaching out to 4H, Karate, Boy scouts, Girl scouts, and Young Professionals. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will start a list of other potential partners for these events. After the July meeting, the Commission will start circulating promotional materials to these groups and their own social networks. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will also invite Liz Clifone, an interested citizen, to our July meeting to join in our planning/promotion discussion.

b. Red Mountain Trail Grant Update

DEEP is drafting grant agreement. Waiting on them to proceed.

c. Orphaned TTC Properties

Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will present Conservation Commission recommendations to city council sometime this summer. Will coordinate with Mayor.

d. Open Space Inventory

The Commission is making good progress. Mr. Nardi-Cyrus will create a list of all Open Space encroachments and prioritize them. There was a brief discussion of the prior site visits. Next visit will be Weds July 12th at 10 at locations TBD by Mr. Nardi-Cyrus.

e. Natural Resources Inventory

Nothing new to report.

5. Adjournment:

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

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