

**Preston Conservation and Agricultural Commission
Regular Meeting
Monday, January 23, 2023
Preston Town Hall
7:30 pm.**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Piszczek called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

2. Roll Call

Regular Members

Gary Piszczek, Chairman
Matthew Snurkowski, Vice Chairman
Lynwood Crary
Margaret Gibson - excused
Sandy Pimentel – arrived 7:40 pm
Ted Zajac

Alternates

Roberta Charpentier - seated
Rebecca Hayes - seated

Chairman Piszczek seated Becky Hayes and Roberta Charpentier

3. Approval of the November 28, 2022 Regular Meeting minutes

A motion was made by L. Crary and seconded by M. Snurkowski to accept the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 28, 2022 as presented.

All in favor. Motion carries.

4. Comments from the Public

No Public present

5. Communications

- a) Letter Dated : November 20, 2022: The Connecticut Audubon Society, Support Request.
- b) Letter Dated: November 28, 2022: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Contribution Request.
- c) Email: November 29, 2022: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Monthly Review.
- d) Email: December 9, 2022: CT DEEP; Wildlife Highlights
- e) Email: December 20, 2022: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Monthly Review
- f) Bulletin: Winter 2023, received January 5, 2023: The Connecticut Audubon Society; Northeast Corner Programs

A motion was made by L. Crary and seconded by S. Pimentel to approve a donation of \$100.00 to the Connecticut Audubon Society.

All in favor. Motion carries

- g) Email: January 6, 2023: CT DEEP; Wildlife Highlights
- h) Email: January 12, 2023: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, New Hikes and Places to Explore.
- I) Email: January 14, 2023: The Connecticut Baudouin Society, EcoTravel
- j) Email: January 15, 2023: The Connecticut Baudouin Society, EcoTravel
- k) Email: January 17, 2023: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Weekly eNews.

l) Letter Dated: January 10, 2023: The Last Green Valley, consistent signage throughout The Valley.

m) Approved Meeting Calendar for 2023

n) Approved Budget 2022-2023

o) Expenditures to Date

6. Public Hearing

None

7. Old Business

a) Clustered Zoning Regulations – Agri hood Planning

Tabled

b) State Hospital Development

Chairman Nugent met with someone who is proposing a Military Museum on the Norwich property

c) Beaver bumper report

Walden Preserve in Salem has beavers

d) Petroglyph in Preston, CT

M. Snurkowski noted that because of all the rain it is under water again.

e) Eversource – Mary Dora Woodland parking area.

Eversource has offered the Town \$10,000 for an easement through the Mary Dora Woodland; Chairman Piszczek requested that those funds be put in the open space fund.

Eversource is going to put up a locked gate

f) The right to Farm Ordinance

M. Snurkowski will update the draft with the changes and corrections he received.

g) POCD

Chairman Piszczek noted that K. Warzecha has been helping. The focus is on the Cove and Watershed from Amos Lake.

Chairman Piszczek suggested making a list or map of active farm land in Preston.

h) Ordinance for tax exemption for farm equipment increased to \$200,000

L. Cray has sent it to the First Selectwoman

i) LOTCIP Grant – Poquetanuck Village Traffic Calming Plan

Chairman Piszczek will discuss with K. Warzecha

j) Meeting Calendar for 2023

done

8. Boots on the Ground – paddles in the water report, Amos Lake Association.

Pat Monahan is not attending tonight's meeting because of the weather, but sent an email informing the CAC that the Amos Lake Association will hold another Paddles on the Water event(s) in 2023.

9. Membership

a) Theodore Zajac

A motion was made by L. Crary and seconded by G. Piszczek to approve a new 6 year term for Ted Zajac, expiring December 31, 2028.

All in favor. Motion carries.

9. New Business

a) Poquetanuck Cove Partnership

Chairman Piszczek will contact Jean Pillo, **Eastern Connecticut Conservation District**

b) Route 164 – Scenic or Speedway

Chairman Piszczek noted that Margaret Gibson would like to pursue addressing this issue.

c) Agricultural Preservation Fund

K. Warzecha suggested putting \$15,000 in the CAC budget specifically for matching funds from the the Open Space fees that come in, to build up the Open Space Fund.

d) ECCD – Rain Garden – riparian Buffer Project

Maura Robie, natural resource specialist, The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, Inc. will attend next months meeting to discuss.

See New London Day Article, December 2022;

Rain garden project underway

Rain gardens and vegetated buffers are coming to Groton, Preston Ledyard, and Stonington to help protect the watershed and reduce flooding.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, Inc., is working on a project to install vegetated buffers along waterfronts and rain gardens using native plants, said Maura Robie, the group's natural resource specialist. Several have already been installed, with more being planned.

The nonprofit organization received in May an approximately \$136,000 grant from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund for the project, Robie said.

The goal of the two-year project is to not only install 20 rain gardens, on properties from residential to commercial, and five vegetated buffers, but also to inspire residents and equip them with the tools they need to install their own, she said.

Robie said this type of green infrastructure provides benefits, including protecting water quality, helping to mitigate flooding, and helping to provide food and shelter for pollinator species.

"It's a really great multiple purpose project so we're actually getting a lot of great benefits," Robie said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines a rain garden as "a depressed area in the landscape that collects rain water from a roof, driveway or street and allows it to soak into the ground."

Robie said the green infrastructure is the kind of solution that just about anybody can implement.

While towns and municipalities may tackle stormwater issues with larger, more expensive projects, the gardens and buffers offer a lower cost way to infiltrate stormwater runoff, reduce flooding and erosion, and recharge groundwater, she said.

"It's a really nice way to just try to contain stormwater on site as we continue to have these more extreme weather events," Robie said.

Robie said that the native plants that are used have adapted to the area's weather patterns and soil so they require minimal care once they're established, and the plants selected tend to be drought-resistant.

She explained that rain gardens need to be well-maintained for the first two years until they get established, and then should be fairly low maintenance.

The conservation district is working with local groups and conservation commissions to map out priority areas and hopes to use the Tri Town Trail in Preston, Ledyard and Groton as a guide for some of the locations.

The project also calls for "following the strategies of the 'Pollinator Pathways Project,' " an established program focused on forming corridors of pollinator-friendly habitats and food sources for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinating insects and wildlife, and building connections between properties using landscape techniques that will not be harmful to the declining pollinator populations," according to the conservation district.

One of the recent installations was a 140-square-foot rain garden at the Groton Housing Authority's Pequot Village housing development. Volunteers, including members of the Electric Boat Management Association and the Groton Pollinator Pathways group, helped plant about 44 plants for the garden, Robie said.

The garden is within the Baker Cove Watershed, a small watershed in the City and Town of Groton that currently has poor water quality because of pollution by fecal coliform, said Robie, who also facilitates the Baker Cove Watershed Committee. The committee is working on a number of priorities from the Baker Cove Watershed Based Plan that include installing riparian buffers and rain gardens wherever possible, so the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District's project helps that goal, she said.

Robie said the conservation district plans to share information with residents, including through workshops and brochures.

People interested in workshops or plantings can check the towns' and cities' websites and social media in the spring for more information.

e) FY2024 Budget Discussion

CAC
Regular Meeting
January 23, 2023

Total budget request: \$19,522.00

A motion was made by L. Crary and seconded by G. Piszczek to approve \$500 to Eastern Connecticut Conservation District.

All in favor. Motion carries.

A motion was made by L. Crary and seconded by G. Piszczek to approve the 2023/24 budget as proposed,

All in favor. Motion carries.

10. Meanderings

None

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

RT Charpentier

Roberta Charpentier
Preston Recording Secretary

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PRESTON, CT.

2023 JAN 31 A 9:33

J. Keich
PRESTON TOWN CLERK