

Town of Canaan  
Inland Wetlands/Conservation Commission  
Minutes of Regular Meeting, March 16, 2026

Members Present: Mark Burdick, Susan Kelsey, Ellery Sinclair (FaceTime), Marleen Van Gulick  
Others Present: Bruce Bennett (Kent and Cornwall tree warden), Chris Kinsella (selectman), Tim Downs (highway foreman)

Meeting was called to order at 7:11 P.M. Minutes of December 2025 were reviewed. Motion made by Kelsey to approve December 2026 minutes as presented; seconded by Sinclair; passed unanimously.

**Old Business:**

**1. Town Street Tree Management:** Burdick introduced invited guest Bruce Bennett, arborist and tree warden for the Towns of Cornwall and Kent, and explained that in conjunction with the Town receiving bronze certification with Sustainable CT, a 'Forestry Advisory Committee' within the Inland Wetlands/Conservation Commission had been established and inquiries had been received from residents regarding street tree maintenance. The Commission has been attempting to address the issues involving both short and long-term tree maintenance of trees along town roads. Bennett explained how typically he periodically meets with the town's highway foreman and reviews the roads for trees of concern. Using an application on his phone, he locates and records specific trees that present potential hazard/liability issues to the town. Bennett emphasized the need for towns to be diligent in assessing and recording said trees and formulating a plan for removal to help absolve towns of potential liability issues. Burdick and Kelsey shared that the Commission has started to record what appear to be potentially hazardous trees and intend to continue with the assessment. Bennett suggested we check with the State's Urban Forestry Council for grants possibly available to help defray town tree removal costs; said grants have been available in the past. Bennett shared information regarding a free app for the phone ("Trees Count") that helps locate and record information regarding trees. Downs reported that currently \$9,000 is allocated annually in his budget for tree removal; the highway crew performs a portion of the removal and cleanup to help minimize cost; the majority of the tree removal budget goes toward the contracting of a bucket truck. Both Bennett and Downs work in conjunction with the power company, although the power company often needs to be pressured to follow up on scheduled removals. Bennett informed the Commission that trees slated for removal, according to State statute, need to be tagged 10 days prior to removal with a note informing of said removal; Bennett referred members to the tree warden manual.

**2. Cobble Road Hollenbeck River Bridge Replacement:** Selectman Kinsella reported that the bridge replacement is now in the hands of the State. The cost of the bridge replacement will be paid in entirety by the federal government, but said replacement will likely not occur for several years. Going forward, the State may call for the bridge to be entirely closed. Kinsella, Downs and member Van Gulick reported that the recent repairs to the section of Cobble Road at its eastern end appear to be holding up well and water is being directed quite effectively during heavy rainfall events. The culvert replacement over Wangum Brook cannot

occur until the Hollenbeck River bridge has been replaced. The culvert costs will ultimately be equally shared with the State through an open grant.

Burdick informed members of a letter dated 2-25-2026 forwarded to the IW/CC from First Selectman Barger that he had received from the Council on Environmental Quality. The letter was in regard to the pending Hollenbeck River bridge replacement, advising the Canaan Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commission to carefully review the proposed project at the appropriate time. DEEP and USFWS records indicate that the Long Eared Bat (listed as endangered) and the Bog Turtle (listed as threatened) might occur in the vicinity of the proposed project area.

**3. Commission Member Appointment:** A motion was made by Kelsey to have Sinclair send a memo to the Board of Selectmen requesting that Marleen Van Gulick be appointed as a regular member to the Commission; seconded by Sinclair; passed unanimously. Van Gulick, currently an alternate member would be replacing Matt Gallagher whose term has expired and who no longer wishes to serve on the Commission.

#### **New Business**

**1. 2026 Housatonic railroad Spraying Update:** Bennett shared that Housatonic Railroad Company is not in compliance with state regulations regarding herbicide usage for railroad vegetation management. They have not compiled a map delineating critical areas where no herbicide application is to occur (e.g. wetlands, watercourses, wells). The Housatonic River Working Group has notified Horn and Harding regarding this issue of non-compliance and they have agreed to contact the DOT, the agency who has jurisdiction over railroads within the State. According to Bennett, the Housatonic Railroad Company is using a “cocktail” of 6 chemicals, including methyl 240 which is known to be a threat to water tables. Sinclair will stay in communication with the HRWG regarding this issue.

**2. Dean Inquiry, Fire Pond Clean-Out:** Kelsey reported having been contacted by Stephen Dean regarding the process for cleaning out the fire pond on Route 126 near Kellogg Pond. Downs said that the Fire Department had approached Dean about cleaning out the fire pond as it is silted in, making it unacceptable as a water source for firefighting purposes. Members noted that in the past, the Commission has waived the application fee and the need to submit an application for cleaning out fire ponds as long as best management practices are adhered to. Kelsey expressed that spoils from the pond not be spread out beyond the perimeter banks of the pond as wetlands appear to be in proximity to the pond. Downs said that spoils would be deposited only at the pond’s perimeter and not spread elsewhere. Sinclair made a motion that the Commission approve the request to clean out the aforementioned fire pond, foregoing both an application and fee payment with the condition that spoils not be spread beyond the perimeter of the pond and that the project be undertaken under dry conditions; seconded by Van Gulick; passed unanimously. Kelsey will provide Downs with copies of the minutes for him to give to Dean.

#### **Routing Sheet Sign-Offs:**

**1. HVRHS Ag Science and Tech Dept./CL&P Leased Property, Warren Turnpike Road:** 14’ X 20’ non-permanent pavilion (no foundation or electricity) on sonotubes. 2-26-26.

#### **Communications:**

**1. DEEP State Waters Permit Application, Aeschliman Property, 283 Route 63:** Notification of intent of commercial applicator (Water and Wetland LLC) to apply aquatic

pesticides in Aeschliman ponds to treat water lilies, water shield, duckweed, watermeal and algae. (Application noted NDDDB Letter of Approval).

**2. Wetlands Roundtable Discussion:** Notice was received informing members of a roundtable discussion regarding application process on March 25, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at Cornwall Free Library.

**3. Connecticut Land Conservation Council Membership Request:** Kelsey made a motion that the Commission become a member with the annual dues of \$100; seconded by Sinclair; passed unanimously. Kelsey will fill out application and submit to treasurer to request payment.

Sinclair made a motion to adjourn at 8:46 p.m.; seconded by Van Gulick; passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Kelsey, secretary