

Conservation Commission of the Town of Litchfield

Land Use Office, 80 Doyle Road

PO Box 12, Bantam, CT

Regular Meeting, August 25, 2025

7:00 PM, Bantam Town Hall Annex, Bantam, CT

Members Present:

Barbara Putnam, Chairman

Diane Stoner, Vice-Chairman

Marcia Fowler

Cleve Fuessenich

Chester Reed

Members absent: Mark Austin, Clerk, Jordan Richards

Meeting called to order at 7:25 PM.

Approval of April minutes postponed pending completion of the minutes.

July minutes approved unanimously by a motion made by Cleve and seconded by Diane.

An item to discuss the office of Clerk was added to the agenda by unanimous consent.

Office of Clerk - Committee addressed the status of Clerk Mark Austin. Mr. Austin has not attended a regular meeting of the Commission nor notified Chairman Putnam of his absence for at least three months. A review of the By-Laws determined that Mr. Austin can be replaced by a majority vote of the commission. Diane is willing to serve, but is Vice Chair, so a new vice chair will be needed as well.

Motion to replace Mr. Austin with Diane Stoner as clerk and Cleve Fuessenich to the vice-chairman position, effective immediately, was made by Chester Reed and seconded by Marcia Fowler, all voted in favor. .

Old Business

Discussion about the Riparian Areas event scheduled for September 30 at 7 PM at the Litchfield Community Center. Marcia compiled a list of 366 property owners in riparian areas. Barbara will have postcards printed at Printmaster in Torrington, and they will be sent to these owners inviting them to the September presentation. The Committee can use the franking machine at Town Hall for the postcards. The event needs to be posted on the Town website. The event does not have a formal title as yet. Marcia will notify Barbara when the title has been determined.

Open Space Acquisition Project

Enforcement: The town has appointed a new Zoning Official who should be responsible for enforcement of violations of conservation easements. The Town needs to verify that there are no

encroachments of conservation easements. Steve Magary has looked at our list of 20 properites and stated that it is a big job, involving title searching and mapping. Barbara has talked to Marty Connor about who we could hire to do such work, and he recommended we see if we can get a surveyor to do it. We will need extra funding. Barbara will discuss applying for a grant with the first selectman.

Vacating Conservation Easements: An inquiry about undoing a conservation easement brought up the question of whether it would be possible to exchange an easement for a contribution to the Open Space Acquisition Fund. All agreed that a legal opinion was needed. This would be helpful in particular with several very small easements. Barbara will check in with the first selectman about whether we can seek a legal opinion on this.

Property Conveyance Tax: The question of the Property Conveyance Tax in CT was discussed. 19 towns in CT have the ability to apply conveyance tax revenues to open space acquisitions. As the law currently reads, Litchfield cannot use this legislation to generate more revenue for open space.

POCAD: The Committee at the previous meeting moved that the Open Space Plan as prepared by the Conservation Commission be included in the soon-to-be-revised POCAD for the Town. The Planning and Zoning Commission has put that project out for bid., By law it needs to be completed by the end of 2027 or lose State funding.

Open Space Plan: The Committee reviewed, paragraph by paragraph, the Open Space Plan to prepare it for official inclusion in the POCAD.

Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 22, 2026.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Stoner, Secretary
August 26, 2026