

# Conservation Commission of the Town of Litchfield

Land Use Office, 80 Doyle Road, PO Box 12, Bantam, CT 06750

## Regular Members

Mark Austin, Chair  
John Baker  
John Cox  
Cleve Fuessenich  
Barbara Putnam, Clerk  
Jordan Richards, Vice Chair  
Diane Stoner

## Alternates

Marcia Fowler  
Vacancy

## Draft Minutes REGULAR MEETING

September 26, 2023

7 PM, Bantam Town Hall Annex, Bantam, CT

Mark Austin called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

**Members Present:** Mark Austin, John Baker, John Cox, Cleve Fuessenich, Jordan Richards, Barbara Putnam, and Diane Stoner.

**Alternates Present:** Marcia Fowler

**Others Present:** Spencer Musselman, Land Use Administrator

**Approval of Minutes** – Jordan Richards made and Diane Stoner seconded a motion to accept the June 27, 2023 minutes as submitted. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

**Public Comment:** none

**2024 Meeting Schedule:** John Cox made and Barbara Putnam seconded a motion to adopt the 2024 meeting schedule as submitted. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

## Correspondence:

### Request from Burlington

In discussion of the questions addressed to the Commission by the Town of Burlington, we agreed that it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the PA490 program without knowing what would have happened had it never been enacted. We agreed that questions concerning the effect of the program on the Town's budget would be better addressed to our Board of Finance. The Town enacted the program decades ago because it supports the preservation of open space. Open space is an important part of our history. Our Plan of Conservation and Development specifically supports open space preservation because it helps maintain the rural character of the

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town. In addition to our 490 properties, the White Memorial, Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy, and Topsmead provide open space recreation and tourism, which is an important part of the local economy. Barbara Putnam, clerk agreed to draft a response to the Burlington PZC for review by the Commission.

**Request to support open space acquisition:** A draft of a letter supporting the Litchfield Land Trust's acquisition of the Putnam property on Fern Road was discussed and edited. After revision, Diane Stone made and Cleve Fuessenich seconded a motion to support the Litchfield Land Trust's acquisition of the Putnam property through grants. Barbara Putnam recused herself from the vote, all others voted in favor and the motion carried.

### **Open Space Acquisition Project:**

Barbara Putnam has edited the open space acquisition text to function as the landing page of a website. She will forward the draft to Mark Austin, who will circulate it to the committee for discussion at our next meeting.

**Natural and Community Resources Inventory:** No action

### **Old Business:**

**Open Space Acquisition Fund:** Spencer has yet to get a report from Denise Raap about her conversation with our Town Attorney about the mechanism by which these funds can be used. He will continue to solicit her opinion.

### **Town Conservation Easements:**

Spencer Musselman now has a list of the 13 Conservation Easements that have been deeded to the Town. He agreed to review them and start monitoring them. He will report back to us next month. Cleve Fuessenich offered the idea that if any of them have little or no conservation value, we might consider asking a Town Meeting for permission to sell them and put the proceeds in the Open Space Acquisition Fund.

### **New business:**

#### **Correspondence regarding the Milde property:**

A letter from the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy, which has a contract for 670 acres of the Milde Property on Town Farm Road, asks for our support in their applications for grants. Mark Austin can use the Litchfield Land Trust letter as a template to draft this endorsement letter.

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John Cox made and Diane Stoner seconded a motion to strongly support this project, and authorize Mark Austin to complete the letter and send it out in time for their deadline. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

**New members:** No one had any candidates for the remaining alternate position

### **Review of Action Items:**

Barbara will draft a response to the Burlington Planning and Zoning Commission to be circulated to the Commission.

Mark will complete and send out the letters supporting open space acquisition of the Putnam and Milde properties.

Barbara will send the Open Space document for our web page to Mark to be circulated to the Commission.

Spencer will continue to seek out Denise Raap's report on Mike Ryback's opinion on the use of the Open Space Acquisition Fund.

Spencer will research the Town's conservation easements.

**Adjournment:** at 8:12 p.m.

Next regularly scheduled meeting: October 23, 2023

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