

Naugatuck Conservation Commission October 26, 2023 ZOOM Meeting Minutes

Meeting opened at 7:04pm with the following in attendance:

Members: Melissa Leonard (Chairwoman), Shagufta Zahid, Ryan Plourde, Jimmy Ayash, Christine Yannielli, Alison Sanchirico (Alternate Member)

Guest Presenters: Christine O'Neill (NVCOG), Stephanie Camp (SCRCOG)

Public: Len Yannielli

1. Meeting called to order. Quorum determined. Pledge of allegiance. Our mission: The Naugatuck Conservation Commission exists to protect and preserve natural resources, wildlife habitats, environments, and open areas from pollution, fragmentation, climate change, and loss of habitat.
2. Tabled approval of September 28, 2023 minutes until November meeting.
3. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - a. Len Yannielli remarked that the good work the Naugatuck Conservation Commission does extends further than we realize.
 - b. Len reported that he met with and sent material to Board of Education candidate Bob Mezzo.
 - c. Len commented on the importance of climate mitigation and urged the commission to center in on land, specifically grasslands.
 - i. Len commented on the YMCA purchase of the Wilmot property, voicing opposition to a swimming pool and cautioning on behalf of bobolinks. Len reported that the Gunntown Group will request that a minimum of 30 acres of the 65 acre property at the top of the plateau be grassland/meadow. He also remarked on the possible milkweed, butterfly, and bluebird work that could be done if we protect the area.
 - ii. Len discussed ensuring that the 45 additional acres the town recently bought gets signed to Gunntown and that refuge areas will need to be delineated.
 - d. Len voiced opposition to the proposal to build on the Salinardi Property.
 - i. Len commented that apartments should only be built on the brownfields downtown.
 - ii. Melissa echoed opposition to the proposal and commented that we need to base our arguments on regulations.
 - iii. Melissa reported that there is an Inland Wetlands Public Hearing on the proposed property development on Wednesday November 1st at 6:30pm. The hearing will be at the Board of Education at Naugatuck High School and virtual on Zoom.
4. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. NVCOG Climate Webinar
 - i. Christine O'Neill from Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) and Stephanie Camp from South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG), gave a presentation on the \$1 million [Climate Pollution Reduction Grant](#) which supports planning efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, especially in Low-

Income, Disadvantaged Communities (LIDAC), of which Naugatuck contains several.

- ii. Christine and Stephanie explained the importance of public participation and engagement in the development of plans for the New Haven-Milford Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).
- iii. Commission Members offered their ideas for possible projects that would be a priority for Naugatuck:
 - 1. Ryan suggested expansion of busing in and around town and expansion of the Waterbury line.
 - 2. Shagufta suggested electric vehicle charging.
 - 3. Melissa offered the issue of tree cutting along highways and suggested reclaiming brownfields.
 - 4. Christine suggested electrifying school buses and 15-minute cities.

iv. More information and a priorities survey can be found at <https://www.cprgct.org/>.

- b. DOT Tree Cutting on Highways – Tabled
- c. Inflation Reduction Act Funding – Tabled
- d. Grassland Preservation – Tabled

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. POCD

- i. Melissa reported that the Planning Commission has a meeting on Monday October 30th to discuss the Plan of Conservation & Development but there is no public comment. She reported that they will set a Public Hearing on the Plan for December 11th.
- ii. Christine commented that she sent in corrections to the Plan and that the writer used some of our verbiage but that there were other problems.

b. Sierra Club Wildlife Committee Update

- i. Christine reported on the grasslands presentation that Tanya Bourgoin gave on Thursday August 24th.

c. Naugatuck Valley Project Update

- i. Melissa reported that NVP was supposed to go door knocking about the dangerous Platts Mills factory last weekend but got rained out. She reported that they are also trying to do an awareness campaign on the Waterbury factory that burned down last summer.

6. ADJOURNMENT: 8:38pm