

Branford Conservation and Environment Commission  
P.O. Box 150  
Branford Town Hall  
Branford, Connecticut

## ***MEETING***

## ***MINUTES***

**WEDNESDAY, April 2, 2025**

**Branford Community Center, 30-48 Church St., [2<sup>nd</sup> floor Conference Room](#)**

**7:30 p.m.**

**or via Zoom with the link below if unable to attend in person.**

Commissioners Present: Heather Wells Sweeney, Patrick Sweeney, Neil Goodlad,  
Lauren Ruotolo, Carol Kaminsky, Karyl Lee Hall, Karen Hannon  
Commissioners Absent: Christie Day, Joshua Greenberg

Note: Neil Goodlad left the meeting at 8:34 pm due to the time difference. He was attending the meeting via zoom from London.

1. Approval of minutes:

A. March 5, 2025

Chairperson Sweeney noted the word Branford should be added to section 2B.

**Neil Goodlad made a motion to approve the minutes with the edit by Chairperson Sweeney.**

**Carol Kaminsky seconded the motion which passed.**

**Karyl Lee Hall abstained.**

2. Correspondence and Announcements:

A. Email from Gary @ DPW re: cutting of vegetation at Chet's

Pond/Shoreline Greenway Trail (Response sent to Larry Albert via email)

Chairperson Sweeney read the email and the commission discussed it. She said she forwarded it to the resident who inquired.

N. Goodlad disagreed with the email and asked if he could meet with Gary from DPW to discuss it further.

Chairperson Sweeney said she would set up a meeting.

B. Email from Town Engineer announcing Chestnut Street/Supply Ponds bridge project

Chairperson Sweeney noted she misplaced the email and there was a meeting about this item last night and she will look into what happened at the meeting and report back.

C. Presentation of Budget to Board of Finance; Ways and Means

Chairperson Sweeney said she presented the commissions budget and there were no comments from anyone. The next meeting is mid-April with

the Ways & Means Committee. She will report back on that meeting at the next meeting.

Also, of note us she received a letter from the attorney representing the applicant for a project on 25 South Montowese Street . They had gone before the Zoning Board of appeals and this commission had sent a letter with some concerns. The attorney would like to meet with the commission to discuss their concerns.

The commission then discussed how to proceed. A suggestion was made to contact the Town Attorney for guidance. Karyl Lee Hall offered to work with Chairperson Sweeney in drafting a response letter.

### 3. New Business:

- A. Report from Karen Hannon on the Living Shorelines Workshop  
Karen Hannon attended the workshop and said it was very informative and interesting. Some representatives from DEEP were there and gave some valuable information on how to protect birds, etc. The Audubon Society was also there and gave a great presentation.
- B. Report from Lauren Ruotolo on the Annual Conference of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council  
Lauren attended and noted it was mostly catered to Land Trust and the theme was rewilding, inner city areas, nurture what nature is there, and more. She enjoyed the communication aspect and said mail and flyers are effective ways to get info out. She got some good ideas out of the conference.

### 4. Previous Business:

- A. Tree Give-away with Community Forest Commission—need volunteers  
Chairperson Sweeney noted that the date will be either 4-26-25 or 5-17-25 for the tree give away and help is needed. Please let her know if you can help out.
- B. Eric Lepeak's proposal  
Chairperson Sweeney and Neil Goodlad met with Eric noting that he's interested in planting food items, and he is looking at areas of town that are covered in invasives. His thought was perhaps the soil can be repaired and food items planted there.  
Eric was present at the meeting and spoke briefly, noting he would like to connect with more people in the town and what Heather stated was correct.  
The commission discussed this a bit, noting this was brought up in the past as a possible idea.

Chairperson Sweeney mentioned she didn't add this item to Previous Business but should have: Rodenticides & Neonics.

She turned this item over to Patrick Sweeney since he was going to reach out to some people regarding this topic.

P. Sweeney then spoke saying he reached out to four individuals: Gary Zelensky from Public Works, Dale Izzo who is the new head of Parks & Recreation and David who is the chair of the Green Committee. Also, the head of facilities of the Schools in Branford. They seemed like the relevant people to reach out to because the task was to contact people who might be utilizing neonic herbicides or using the second generation revensicides. He heard back from the head of facilities, and he said they are prohibited from using some things on school grounds because there are children there. He learned that the Green Committee is not involved in landscaping. He is waiting to hear back from the other people. The commission discussed this briefly.

5. Budget:

A. Fiscal year 2024/25 - year to date

Chairperson Sweeney briefly gave the commission a review of budget items .

6. Continuing Business:

A. Permits for coastal projects-- None

B. Proposed developments and other building projects- Nothing was discussed

C. Invasive plant control

Patrick Sweeney noted he is working on this. It has been delayed since prior meetings have been postponed for different reasons.

D. Pollinator Pathway

i. Great meeting Monday 3/31 with Jana Hogan from *the* Pollinator Pathway organization

The chairperson said it was a great meeting, very informative (more details are in the minutes)

ii. BELC workdays with Scouts, BCEC

Chairperson Sweeney said she had a recent workday with the scouts to work on clearing some mug wort. They put plastic down to help with that.

E. Natural Resource Inventory

Chairperson Sweeney met with Lauren Ruotolo and discussed this. She gave a few details.

**F. Litter Clean-up Saturday, April 26**

i. Report from Subcommittee

Lauren Ruotolo and Chairperson Sweeney met to discuss ways to increase participation. Lauren has flyers that she will distribute in the Short Beach area. She suggested maybe target specific neighborhoods such as starting in Short Beach.

Lauren requested \$50.00 to cover the cost for flyers, which she will put up on bulletin boards in that area. She also suggested maybe buying some snacks to give to the volunteers, as well as perhaps holding a raffle for a local restaurant gift certificate for the people

who come out to volunteer as a thank you gift for helping.

Chairperson Sweeney said she thinks more grabbers are needed for this clean up event.

Patrick Sweeney made a motion to spend up to \$200.00 to purchase flyers, snacks and additional grabbers for the clean-up day.

Carol Kaminsky seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

G. Branford Festival **Saturday, June 15**

*\*\*What do we want to do?\*\**

Chairperson Sweeney displayed the colored sheets she made for the tri fold display for the festival. The theme is promoting pollinator plants. She asked the commission for ideas for the booth. The commission discussed this briefly. The group liked the idea of the plant giveaway. Carol Kaminsky will contact Natureworks for more information.

Carol Kaminsky made a motion to spend \$2500.00 for plants for the Branford Festival.

Patrick Sweeney seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Chairperson asked the commission for volunteers to help with the booth at the festival.

H. Crabbing Bridge (Guilford)

Karyl Lee Hall had nothing new to report on this. but asked to change the description to Scenic Roads Commission. She gave a brief history on this

I. Farm River coalition

i. Water Quality Symposium Mar 19

Chairperson Sweeney said this Symposium was very well attended.

ii. Fundraising dance for Friends of the Farm River & Estuary

**Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup>**

Italian-American Club, 509 Laurel St., East Haven

J. Pilot Forest Stewardship Plan

Chairperson Sweeney said she has been working with the Forester from Conwood who developed the plan, and they are almost final. She will let the commission know more information as she receives it.

7. Reports:

A. Select Committee for Open Space Acquisition- Nothing was discussed

B. Library books donations

Carol Kaminsky gave a brief update saying all the books were purchased and delivered and there were funds leftover that will go back in the budget.

C. Spill reports- None

D. Contaminated sites - None

E. Coastal Resiliency Plan- Nothing was discussed

F. Communications and Engagement

Lauren Ruotolo said she met with Neil Goodlad and they would like to take charge of this item since they have access to the Facebook page. She went into some details on how they would use social media. She also said they created an email address: Branfordconservation@gmail.com.

8. Other:

A. Tweed Airport Expansion

Karyl Lee Hall said she has nothing to report.

B. Spotting Scope, GPS

Chairperson Sweeney said she has a spotting scope and GPS unit.

She suggested donating them to the library so people could check them out as a long-term loan or as a gift. She asked the commission to weigh in.

The group decided it should be considered a long-term loan.

Patrick Sweeney made a motion to donate the two items to the library as a long-term loan.

Lauren Ruotolo seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

9. Adjournment- 9:14 pm