

SALISBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

JANUARY 5, 2023 – 6:00PM (VIA ZOOM)

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.
2. Roll Call. Present: Maria Grace, Lee Potter, Tom Blagden, Susan Rand, Abby Conroy (Land Use Director) and Georgia Petry (Recording Secretary). Absent: Zach Sadow. In Attendance: Curtis Rand
3. **Approval of Agenda. So Moved** by L. Potter, seconded by T. Blagden and unanimously **Approved.**
4. **Approval of Minutes of 12/14/2022. So Moved** by T. Blagden, seconded by L. Potter and unanimously **Approved.**
5. Public Comment – None
6. Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) Workshop/Discussion
7. Vernal Pool Study

M. Grace introduced Michael Klemens, Planning & Zoning Chair, as the guest speaker for these 2 topics. He spoke of working on the Town Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) with A. Conroy. The target is to complete the POCD by the end of the first quarter and they need to integrate the NRI into the POCD. M. Grace pointed out that she has created an outline, including updates from 2009, new research and data, and added climate change and invasives as topics to address. Regarding the POCD, A. Conroy noted they are tackling about 10 major priorities and tasks, based on responses to the survey; they refer to documents such as the NRI for those priorities. M. Klemens spoke on many subjects, including: green infrastructure; ecological services; actions that need to be taken; large scale issues such as flood plain protection; unique vertical gradients in Salisbury; the hemlock forests and the large, very important stewardship role Salisbury will have. He mentioned the discussion about how much regulated area there is, how much is protected and the importance of the changing land use manuals. He suggested that the NRI could be taken one step further and turned into policy, as the Conservation Commission is the advocate for the environment and not part of the balancing act. He commented on Salisbury's unique beauty, diverse environment and the enormous responsibility to care for those. He emphasized the concepts of resiliency, critical habitats and critical habitats that are potentially threatened; the NRI, a fact-based document, should talk about the importance of those habitats. T. Blagden asked about the current identification of fens, bogs and vernal pools. Curtis Rand mentioned that the fen habitats are fairly small,

somewhat isolated pockets and have been described in work done by Jason Tesoro. Regarding vernal pools, the need is to figure out which are protected and which aren't; IWWC is changing the regulations to protect them. C. Rand hopes this Commission can reach out to property owners. M. Klemens pointed out that the depth of vernal pools is important as some are very shallow, may be affected by climate change, freezing and drying up; the first filter is the depth of the pools for resiliency to climate change which many may not survive. The discussion continued to include:

- the NRI as a live document to add new data links
- the importance of maintaining agricultural land, including grazing
- the bog turtle sites being degraded and destroyed by groundwater withdrawals
- the need to protect groundwater; protections, buffers and connectivity
- the educational value of the NRI and its inclusion in the POCD

There was discussion about the possibility of Conservation Commission members and some others doing field work. M. Klemens indicated that guidance is needed to do it and experts are needed to evaluate the results; he added that there are pitfalls such as who is responsible for the liability insurance to indemnify property owners. He also pointed out that there is a longer window now, it is more complicated, and the need to contend with changing weather patterns. L. Potter indicated that the NRI document is the top priority. M. Grace asked M. Klemens to write the vernal pools section of the NRI. A. Conroy pointed out that the CT ECO (Environmental Conditions Online) Advanced Viewer map has some descriptions of sites; it will be online at: <https://cteco.uconn.edu/viewer/index.html?viewer=advanced>. The NRI was reviewed; M. Klemens indicated that it lacks surficial geology. M. Grace suggested using the original 2009 NRI, identify deficiencies and updating the text. M. Klemens suggested adding some new recommendations. A. Conroy suggested using the 2009 NRI as the base and doing updates as an addendum. C. Rand suggested that the 2019 draft was sufficient, with many links, and add the needed updates. Needed updates include agriculture, critical habitats, water resources and vernal pools.

**Adjournment. So Moved** by L. Potter, seconded by S. Rand and unanimously **Approved**.

The meeting adjourned at 7:59pm.