

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

JULY 3, 2024 – 3:00PM (HYBRID)

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 3:01pm.
2. Roll Call. Present: Lee Potter, Tom Blagden, Susan Rand, Steve Fitch (Alternate), Sarah Webb (Alternate) and Miles Todaro (Land Use Tech Specialist). Absent: Zach Sadow and Maria Grace. Attending: Joe Walsh and Rob Kimball, Aquarion Water Company; Cynthia Fowx, Nature Conservancy; Jill Humphreys and Gerard Milne, CT DEEP Forestry.
3. **Minutes of June 13, 2024. A Motion to Approve the Minutes of June 13, 2024**, was made by L. Potter, seconded by T. Blagden and unanimously **Approved**.
4. **Minutes of May 9, 2024. A Motion to Approve the Minutes of May 9, 2024** was made by L. Potter, seconded by S. Webb and unanimously **Approved**.
5. Public Comment -- None
6. Centennial Watershed State Forest – Lakeville Reservoir Block Management Plan
 - a. Discussion with Gerard Milne and Jill Humphreys

L. Potter talked about the Management Plan, which is to benefit the drinking water of Lakeville, as an overarching goal and would like to know more about the process involved. L. Potter mentioned that a couple of letters in opposition had been received, but the First Selectman, Curtis Rand, was in agreement with the Plan. Gerard Milne explained that the Plan will go to the upper management of the DEEP; get approved by the Director of the Division of Forestry; and the Bureau Chief of the Division of Forestry, Fishes and Wildlife. The Plan would go onto the E-Alert online Public Comment system for 30 days; DEEP would review the comments; then it would go to the Deputy Commission DEEP for approval and sign-off. L. Potter talked about the letter of opposition received from the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), which raised points not mentioned at the Site Visit on June 13, 2024, such as the active forestry that would take place. Mr. Milne described the forestry activity that would take place; bids by independent contractors; the distribution of the revenue from the sale of the timber from trees taken down; and the actual process of supervision of the activity, such as stumping, location of skid trails and silt fencing. Mr. Milne indicated that revenues received by the State go into the Special Harvest Revolving Fund, which funds other aspects of forest improvement projects elsewhere. L. Potter asked for more specific details of the process and the qualifications of the bidders for the contract. T. Blagden

asked about the issue of invasives and how those are treated chemically in a watershed area; Mr. Milne responded. L. Potter asked if there would be a more detailed plan, going forward; Mr. Milne indicated there would be a more detailed plan about the first harvest. There was more discussion about the topic of how invasive species are identified and handled, while allowing native plant species to regenerate through forest management by opening the tree canopy, which temporarily increases the chance for erosion. S. Webb expressed her agreement with the Plan, regarding the health of the forest. L. Potter commented on the HVA opposition letter; S. Rand asked who would be making the final decision and if this Commission had any impact on it. Mr. Milne responded that the Conservation Land Committee that manages that forest, made up of the water company, the Nature Conservancy, and the DEEP, makes the decision. Mr. Milne commented that core forest can be managed. S. Fitch how long the Plan lasts; Mr. Milne answered 10 years, then re-evaluation, and added that it could take 20 years. Mr. Milne explained that there will be recommendations about what kind of hunting would be allowed, but the decision is up to the Nature Conservancy and Aquarion; there is an application process for hunters, up to a certain number. Numbers of deer hunted get reported. Mr. Milne does not recommend the "Forever Wild" designation because it limits future options, especially concerning unknown conditions that may develop. There was discussion about the current condition of the forest there, which is lacking vegetation under the trees because of browsing by deer, and what it means to have a climax forest; Mr. Milne added that forest should not look like a park. L. Potter suggested that this Commission write a letter of support, publish it in the Lakeville Journal and invite people to come to a site visit to better understand the issues; S. Rand and S. Webb agreed. Cynthia Fowx, Nature Conservancy, was open to the idea of a tour of that forest also. L. Potter will draft a letter for the Commission to review; S. Webb will help with that. Mr. Milne referred to certain points made in the letter from the Salisbury Association Land Trust (SALT); he read from the Natural Resources Management Agreement, which was approved in 2002 and governs the Centennial Watershed State Forest. (The Zoom recording of this meeting is available at: <https://www.salisburyct.us/conservation-commission/>) Mr. Milne mentioned that they are waiting for the letter from this Conservation Commission, in order to submit their package and then post online for comments. L. Potter thanked everyone for their attendance and participation.

L. Potter **Moved to Adjourn** the meeting at 3:54pm, with **All in Favor**.

(These Minutes were drafted from the Zoom recording of the meeting by Georgia Petry, Recording Secretary)