

**Preston Conservation and Agricultural Commission
Special Meeting
Monday, March 13, 2023
Preston Town Hall
7:30 pm.**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Piszczek called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

2. Roll Call

Regular Members

Gary Piszczek, Chairman
Matthew Snurkowski, Vice Chairman
Lynwood Crary
Margaret Gibson - excused
Sandy Pimentel – arrived at 7:40
Ted Zajac

Alternates

Roberta Charpentier
Rebecca Hayes

3. Approval of the November January 23, 2023 Regular Meeting minutes

A motion was made by L. Crary and seconded by M. Snurkowski to accept the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 23, 2023 as presented.

All in favor. Motion carries.

4. Comments from the Public

No Public present

5. Communications

- a) Proposed budget planning
- b) Letter Dated: November 28, 2022: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Contribution Request.
- c) Email: January 31, 2023: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Monthly Review.
- d) Email: February 3, 2023: CT DEEP; Wildlife Highlights
- e) Email: February 13, 2023: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Weekly enews
- f) Email: February 17, 2023: Thanking the CAC you for their \$100 support
- g) Email: February 21, 2023: Connecticut Land Conservation Council
- h) Email: February 23, 2023: Connecticut Land Conservation Council, 2023 Conference eNews

6. Public Hearing

None

7. Old Business

a) Clustered Zoning Regulations – Agri hood Planning

Tabled

b) State Hospital Development

Chairman Piszczek spoke with 1st Selectwoman about the Cove and she suggested meeting with Sean Nugent, PRA Chairman.

c) Beaver report

No comments

d) Petroglyph in Preston, CT

M. Snurkowski noted that because of all the rain it is under water again.

e) The Right to Farm Ordinance

L. Crary sent the draft to Joan Nichols., CT Farm Bureau, Executive Director who explained that the the Town can't be the authority figure, the State is the authority figure. J. Nichols will send examples of other towns that Preston can base theirs on.

f) POCD

Chairman Piszczek noted that from Amos Lake to the Cove should be classified as a waterway. Route 2 to the Quinebaug river (Eversource right of way) should be designated as a Wildlife Corridor.

g) Ordinance for tax exemption for farm equipment increased to \$200,000

L. Crary has sent it to the First Selectwoman who will address once she receives the "Right to Farm" Ordinance.

8. Boots on the Ground – paddles in the water report, Amos Lake Association.

No comments

9. New Business

a) Route 164 – DOT policy - "If it grows, it goes"

Chairman Piszczek noted that Margaret Gibson would like to write a letter tom DOT addressing this issue.

b)Agricultural Preservation Fund – CAC budget request

Request of \$15,000 in the CAC budget specifically for matching funds from the the Open Space fees that come in, to build up the Open Space Fund, was not approved by the BoS.

c) ECCD – Rain Garden – Riparian Buffer Project

Maura Robie, Natural Resource Specialist, Eastern Connecticut Conservation District

Heather Palardy, Eastern Connecticut Conservation District

Jen Paul, UConn student

M. Robie explained that the ECCD is looking to put four rain gardens that are 140 square feet and 1 1,000 foot riparian buffer in the town of Preston. This is part of a bigger project that includes the towns of Ledyard, Groton and Stonington. The idea is to have a dial purpose by installing the buffers and then planting pollinator plants to assist with declining pollinators. UConn students are assisting with the project and one is identifying riparian buffer areas in Preston.

M. Robie asked the CAC to assist with pointing out riparian buffer locations and also with Outreach for this project.

The idea is to encourage residents to pledge to use Native plantings, avoid chemicals and also spread the message to their neighbors

New London Day

Rain garden project underway

Rain gardens and vegetated buffers are coming to Groton, Preston Ledyard, and Stonington to help protect the watershed and reduce flooding.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, Inc., is working on a project to install vegetated buffers along waterfronts and rain gardens using native plants, said Maura Robie, the group's natural resource specialist. Several have already been installed, with more being planned.

The nonprofit organization received in May an approximately \$136,000 grant from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund for the project, Robie said.

The goal of the two-year project is to not only install 20 rain gardens, on properties from residential to commercial, and five vegetated buffers, but also to inspire residents and equip them with the tools they need to install their own, she said.

Robie said this type of green infrastructure provides benefits, including protecting water quality, helping to mitigate flooding, and helping to provide food and shelter for pollinator species.

"It's a really great multiple purpose project so we're actually getting a lot of great benefits," Robie said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines a rain garden as "a depressed area in the landscape that collects rain water from a roof, driveway or street and allows it to soak into the ground."

Robie said the green infrastructure is the kind of solution that just about anybody can implement.

While towns and municipalities may tackle storm water issues with larger, more expensive projects, the gardens and buffers offer a lower cost way to infiltrate storm water runoff, reduce flooding and erosion, and recharge groundwater, she said.

"It's a really nice way to just try to contain storm water on site as we continue to have these more extreme weather events," Robie said.

Robie said that the native plants that are used have adapted to the area's weather patterns and soil so they require minimal care once they're established, and the plants selected tend to be drought-resistant.

She explained that rain gardens need to be well-maintained for the first two years until they get established, and then should be fairly low maintenance.

The conservation district is working with local groups and conservation commissions to map out priority areas and hopes to use the Tri Town Trail in Preston, Ledyard and Groton as a guide for some of the locations.

The project also calls for "following the strategies of the 'Pollinator Pathways Project,' " an established program focused on forming corridors of pollinator-friendly habitats and food sources for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinating insects and wildlife, and building connections between properties using landscape techniques that will not be harmful to the declining pollinator populations," according to the conservation district.

One of the recent installations was a 140-square-foot rain garden at the Groton Housing Authority's Pequot Village housing development. Volunteers, including members of the Electric Boat Management Association and the Groton Pollinator Pathways group, helped plant about 44 plants for the garden, Robie said.

The garden is within the Baker Cove Watershed, a small watershed in the City and Town of Groton that currently has poor water quality because of pollution by fecal coliform, said Robie, who also facilitates the Baker Cove Watershed Committee. The committee is working on a number of priorities from the Baker Cove Watershed Based Plan that include installing riparian buffers and rain gardens wherever possible, so the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District's project helps that goal, she said.

Robie said the conservation district plans to share information with residents, including through workshops and brochures.

People interested in workshops or plantings can check the towns' and cities' websites and social media in the spring for more information.

d) Earth Day trash pickup

Post on Town's Web Site

e) Eversource Easement request

Eversource has committed \$20,000 for a permanent easement on Paster Road. They will be using it to preform maintenance once or twice a year.

Chairman Piszczek requested the CAC go on a site walk at the property before approving the easement.

10. Meanderings

None

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

RT Charpentier

Roberta Charpentier
Preston Recording Secretary

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PRESTON, CT.

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Jim Keith
PRESTON TOWN CLERK