

Town of Montville
Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2025, 6:00 PM
Room 102 – Town Hall

- 1) Call to Order-6:00 p.m.
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call- Chair John Guetens, Vice Chair Jess LeClair, Commissioners Catherine Hinojosa, Adam Heckle, and Bonnie Bacon, Alternate Commissioner Elaine Hess. Also present were Town Council Liaison Nick Sabilia, Mayor Leonard Bunnell Jr, and Town Council Chair Tim May.

- 3) Presentations -Avalonia: Discussion on supporting the acquisition of the Bond Property. Avalonia representatives present were Richard Conant (Board Director), Chris Kepple (Director of Philanthropy), and Dennis Main (Board President, attending via phone). Director Kepple will work with Chair Guetens to prepare some materials for distribution to raise awareness. The Conservation Commission can select points from the website and add our own. He also suggested identifying non-elected community advocates that can advocate for this: Commissioner Heckle will identify and speak with a community advocate, Chair Guetens will contact the scouts; Town Councilor Sabilia will talk with Youth Services and also with Councilor/Parks and Rec Liaison Kate Southard; Councilor May will talk with senior services director Kathy Peck. Director Kepple recommended that a slogan be developed, for instance “Preserve the Bond Property”. Vice Chair LeClair noted that the speaking points should be presented consistently across different platforms. Director Conant will share additional materials. Once materials are prepared, Avalonia will help with a direct mailing. Town Council Chair May said that he has discussed funding with Senator Cathy Osten, who will try to get some funding through the state. The Mayor will talk with the bonding attorney. If this matter goes to bonding, there will be a vote at a Town Meeting, in which case the Public Hearing and the Town Meeting need to be well publicized for good attendance. Avalonia representatives may also reach out to the towns of Waterford and Salem, which benefit from the preservation of this property (in a watershed area). Avalonia representatives left at the end of this discussion.
- 4) Comments from the Public on Agenda Items -none
- 5) Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 3, 2024 – Vice Chair LeClair motioned to approve, seconded by Commissioner Bacon. Vote to approve was unanimous.
- 6) Communications – email was received from Assistant Planner Meredith Badalucca requesting that the Conservation Commission submit a budget for FY 2026.
- 7) Old Business Agenda
 - a) Finalization of Annual Report – final suggestions were made for the 2024 report. Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Hess, seconded by Vice Chair LeClair. The motion passed unanimously.
 - b) AARP community challenge grant – update – Commissioner Hess reviewed the types of grants available and described requirements for each. She noted that applying for the Flagship grant seems to be the

most appropriate choice. She will attend a webinar to get further information on January 29. The application deadline is March 5. She noted that it would likely be more appropriate to wait until next year to apply, given the urgency of supporting the Bond property acquisition during the next couple of months. Some ideas for grants would cover improvements to the boat launch area, which is currently under development, such as a kiosk and a compostable toilet; or an outdoor leaning center/classroom near the Conservation Center or the Mostow property.

c) Conservation Center

- i. Shed building materials – explore avenues for funding. Fair Oaks, Public works, and the Town Hall might have adequate storage space for tools and materials. The Garden Club will talk with the Mayor about what best suits their needs.

8) New Business Agenda

a) Budget discussion –

- i. spending against current budget -no money has been charged against the current budget. Major expenses in 2024 were covered by ARPA funds. The remaining amount in the FY 2025 budget is enough to purchase the trimmer that was approved at the December 2024 meeting.
- ii. proposed budget for July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026 – the FY 2026 budget proposes the same amount for each category as the current budget, with the exception of an increase to miscellaneous supplies for maintenance of the Conservation Center (boards for repairing the benches and for boardwalk repair and new boardwalks, for instance).

b) Montville Trails System brochure review – Commissioner Hinojosa created a prototype trifold brochure based on the information in a brochure developed by Chair Guetens for the Farmers Market booth. She will add information on parking, and qr codes, and will present the completed brochure at the next meeting (Feb 4).

c) CT Trails Day (June 7-8, 2025) planning - will be discussed at the next meeting (Feb 4)

d) Mostow trails near Camp Oakdale -The Conservation Commission will reach out to the Parks and Rec Commission this year to find out if any further trail maintenance has been done and to hear about plans for GIS mapping.

9) Comments from the Public - none

10) Comments from Town Council Liaison – none further

11) Comments from Commissioners – A committee comprised of Chair Guetens, Commissioner Heckle, Town Councilor Sabilia, Town Councilor Southard (proposed), and the Mayor will work with Avalonia to hammer out the communication to Montville citizens about the Bond property. Other commissioners are available to help upon request from Chair Guetens.

12) Adjourn -9:35 p.m.