

# **New Haven Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Town of New Haven  
Conservation Commission Meeting  
Virtual Meeting  
Wednesday, January 19, 2022, 7:00 P.M.**

**Members Present - Dave Lewis, Cheryl Mitchell, Pamela Sonn, Susan Smiley, Mary Pratt, Polly Darnell, Mark Krawczyk**

## **Agenda Items**

### **1 - Update on Wildlife Crossing/Corridor Identification throughout New Haven**

- Susan Smiley shared an update on wildlife crossing monitoring. Jens Hilke has offered to help mentor her/us in developing an organized approach to volunteer data collection.

- Part of the motivation around this project is to be better informed as to existing wildlife corridors in the town of New Haven, map them as part of overlay districts as done in Waltham, and inform the planning commission where these zones currently exist.

- This type of survey would ideally involve up to 20 volunteers who monitor 20 identified road crossings throughout the town of New Haven approximately 2-3 times each winter over the course of 2 years. Surveys would ideally be carried out a day or two following a snowfall to give the animals a chance to traverse the corridors.

- Both Jens Hilke and Jessie Moore highlighted that training us to read tracks will be a very important part of what is necessary

- Jessie Moore suggested planning for up to one year of training before carrying out a monitoring study and pointed us to Sue Morse.

- The town of Monkton is also interested in doing a full blown road crossing study.

-Both Monkton and New Haven have funds to support this training so perhaps we could share the costs of training.

- Susan suggested reaching out to Jens to locate potential trainers

- Cheryl Mitchell recommended Chris Runcie from Four Winds who has done naturalist trainings locally and perhaps could work with us.

- Mark has contacts that he could reach out to if we can't find anyone locally but they are in the Montpelier/Plainfield area so it is quite a distance

- Cheryl has also spoken with several hunters who like the idea of sharing their findings from game cameras, etc.

- Mark offered to identify sites that may be paired together so that we can perhaps reach out to local residents to monitor these specific parts of their community.

- Jim Andrews has shared a sample spreadsheet that illustrates how they collect and quantify data

## **2 – Native plant project ideas and updates from Polly**

- Polly has compiled a list of possible speakers on the subject. She shared that her particular interest is more around re-wilding yards and landscapes rather than planting pollinator supporting plants

- She recently sat in on a panel on “Pollinator Pathways” at Horsfors Nursery  
- They’re looking for a representative from each town to act as something of an “ambassador” of the idea  
- They intend to have a series of speakers including 1 in February, March and May and 2 in April

- The main questions that arose during the talk is how to plant them and where to source planting stock (seeds and starts)

- Perhaps the NHCC could offer a series of three talks on a variety of topics from a variety of speakers?... Including Dr. Samantha Alger and 2 additional speakers

- Pamela has been in conversation with the New Haven librarian about organizing a ‘book club ’ to read Doug Tallamy’s book about oak with 2 planned group discussion sessions.

- Mary offered to work with Pamela to help get this book group started

- Mark suggested an idea for a spring event that could involve a speaker on pollinators and pollinator plantings along with a pollinator plant start giveaway/fundraiser for the NHCC.

- He offered to help broker a bulk plant purchase from a wholesale nursery like New Moon Nursery or North Creek, selecting a half dozen or so species and buying a flat or two worth of each plant.

- We could make these available for free or donation at this event.

- Dave Lewis will research plants from these nurseries to share with Mark for feedback.

- Polly will share a list of recommended species to help refine the search.

- Pamela also shared the Native Plant Finder website to help with plant species selection

- <https://www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder/about>

## **3 - Winter NHCC Events**

- We’ll help cross promote the Pollinator Pathways zoom talk in February

- Dave will check with entomologist Samantha Alger to see if she’d be available for a remote talk in February. He’ll check to see if February 16th will work as a companion to our meeting.

- Polly suggested checking with Bridget Butler as an alternative, talking about birds and their connections to insect populations.

- We discussed holding the first book club discussion in March

- And also possibly working to offer a tracking/wildlife monitoring skills training in March or April

## **4 - Cheryl’s 2021 NHCC summary for the Town Report**

- Cheryl shared this 2021 overview she crafted to submit for this year's town report

### ***New Haven Conservation Commission 2021***

This year the Conservation Commission began studying ways to prevent forest fragmentation. An excellent presentation by Jens Hilke helped to frame the issue. This was a joint meeting of both the Conservation Commission and the Planning Commission. Maps highlighting forest blocks and connectivity corridors were shared. These are available on-line for all town residents to view. The desire to begin documenting wildlife crossings, especially for larger mammals, is now taking shape.

A second major area of focus has been promoting the viability of pollinators. This includes understanding what is happening to our honeybee colonies as well as the situation for many native pollinators. Interest has been expressed related to pollinator corridors, appropriate plantings, pesticide use, learning about life cycles, and understanding the range of eco-systems that support pollinators. In the coming year, the Conservation Commission will be partnering with the New Haven Community Library to share a book reading and discussion and possibly to distribute seeds for pollinator friendly gardening.

A definite highlight of the year was the live naturalist walk led by Mark Krawczyk that highlighted windrow plantings. He shared their experience about which ones were easiest to maintain and most effective in quickly developing corridors. We are hoping for many more live naturalist walks in the coming year.

- Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm