



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

December 16, 2024
7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order: **7:03 PM**

- **Pat Wilson Y**
- **Alejandro Paiuk Y (last meeting)**
- **Jim Fishman Y**
- **Bernie Pelletier Y**
- **Dave Sagers Y**
- **Ted Newton Y**
- **Steve Sack Y**
- **Aditee Madkekar N**
- **Christy Mathews N**
- **Kim Hughes N**
- **Vacant (since Aug 2024)**
- **Vacant (since Nov 2024)**
- **Student Reps: Erica Kahn (Conard HS) – virtual; Nathaniel Goldschmidt (Hall HS)**
- **Staff: Catherine Diviney, Energy Specialist**
- **Public: Jonathan Ferrigno**

2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

- **VOTE: Approved without change, 7-0.**

3. Communications & Community Comment (max 3 min each)

- **Celebrate! West Hartford organizer asked if Sust WH Commission required a booth at Celebrate West Hartford. Commission voted to reserve a booth. VOTE: YES, 7-0.**

4. Ongoing Business

- Student Rep Reports
 - **Nathaniel Goldschmidt (Hall HS)– working on making the bottle recycling program at Hall – setting up a community compost in Westmore park with 4H running it once it was up – working on no idling signage campaign for vehicles (Catherine to help coordinate with Engineering and Public Works. She has some of the state approved anti-idling signs.)**
 - **Erika Kahn (Conard HS)– reported on Catherine Diviney and Katherine Brun's visit to Conard's Environmental Club. Erika has followed up with Katherine Brun to work on food waste diversion in Conard's cafeteria.**

- Recap 12/6 meeting with WHCi
 - *Catherine Diviney, Katherine Bruns, Commissioners Newton, Sagers, and Pelletier met with Jennifer Evans to discuss an organized consistent set of educational and outreach sessions at West Hartford Community Interactive and Library. WHCi was open to the concept. Jen Evans noted that each slot had to be requested using the form on the WHCi website by a WH resident sponsor.*
 - *Commission discussion:*
 - *12 slots may be a lot – 4 or 6 might be better. Can we show the same thing if we run out of material or it is too much work?*
 - *½ hour slot*
 - *Would student representatives like to have a slot?*
 - *We can set up a calendar of events?*
 - *How is it branded - if the commission formerly adopts “Cool West Hartford” as a brand – we may use that name – but for the time being it will simply be the Sustainable West Hartford Commission.*
 - *Next Step – Bernie Pelletier to follow-up/discuss with Jen Evans - how many slots, how long slots are, what happens if we don’t use a slot. Additionally, he’ll propose a calendar of events. Next meeting commission will discuss and commit.*
- Working Group Reports
 - Waste
 - *\$12,000 of ARPA funds to go to food composting.*
 - *The Sust WH Commission would like to be included in the Public Work’s discussion.*
 - *Could Westmoor Park use some of the food scraps for animals?*
 - Nature-Based Solutions
 - *Pat Wilson reports the group working on Wolcott Meadow. They have hired Mike Nadeau (landscape designer). Working on planting policy. Group working on signage for the Wolcott Meadow.*
 - *Group proposing that Cool West Hartford be the brand. Bring in all working groups and community partners. Examples of community partners – would be West Hartford Tree Group.*
 - *Might tie into the calendar on education and outreach of commission and citizens.*
 - *Steve Sack clarified that Cool West Hartford is a town initiative. to be, implemented by the Sustainable WH Commission. It is branded outreach – mostly focused on residents. It would live on the Town website. The Commission would like town support (including funding) for this initiative.*
 - Energy / Buildings
 - *Working on getting a speaker to discussion the SBEA (Small Business Energy Advantage) program on WHCi and at Town local business association meetings. Christine D’Amato (Energy Resources, SBEA Eversource approved contractor) has been contacted as potential presenter.*
 - *Bernie Pelletier to follow up on identified West Hartford Affordable Multifamily Properties.*
 - *Jim Fishman reports that the public meeting for 1800 Asylum Avenue has been moved to January 2025.*

- Finalize Report to Town Council
 - ***Commission discussed the 2024 Report to Town Council. Minor wording changes made and incorporated during the meeting, The Commission voted to approve the final report. VOTE: YES, 7-0 (Attached)***
 - ***Chairman Sagers will share an advance copy of report with the Mayor and Town Manager. The report will be presented to the Public Works, Facilities, and Sustainability Committee on January 9, 2025.***
- 5. New Business
 - ***Discussion of creating an attendance policy to ensure that Commissioners who miss more than 3 meetings without discussion with the Chairman be removed from the Commission. Review of [town ordinance](#) (§ 5-3 Absences from meetings) suggests that this is consistent with current rules. Chair to discuss with Town.***
- 6. Staff Report
 - ***Catherine Diviney reports that the Town is investigating a battery storage pilot at Veteran's Memorial Skating Rink. It would be used to decrease peak demand and associated electricity demand charges and help increase overall electric grid resilience.***
- 7. Calendar Updates – Public Works, Facilities & Sustainability Standing Committee – 1/9/25
- 8. Agenda for Next Meeting – 1/27/25
 - ***WHCi discussion***
 - ***Follow-up to Jan 9 presentation of Sust WH 2024 Report to PWF&S Committee and discussion with Councilors***
- 9. Adjournment: **9:02 PM**

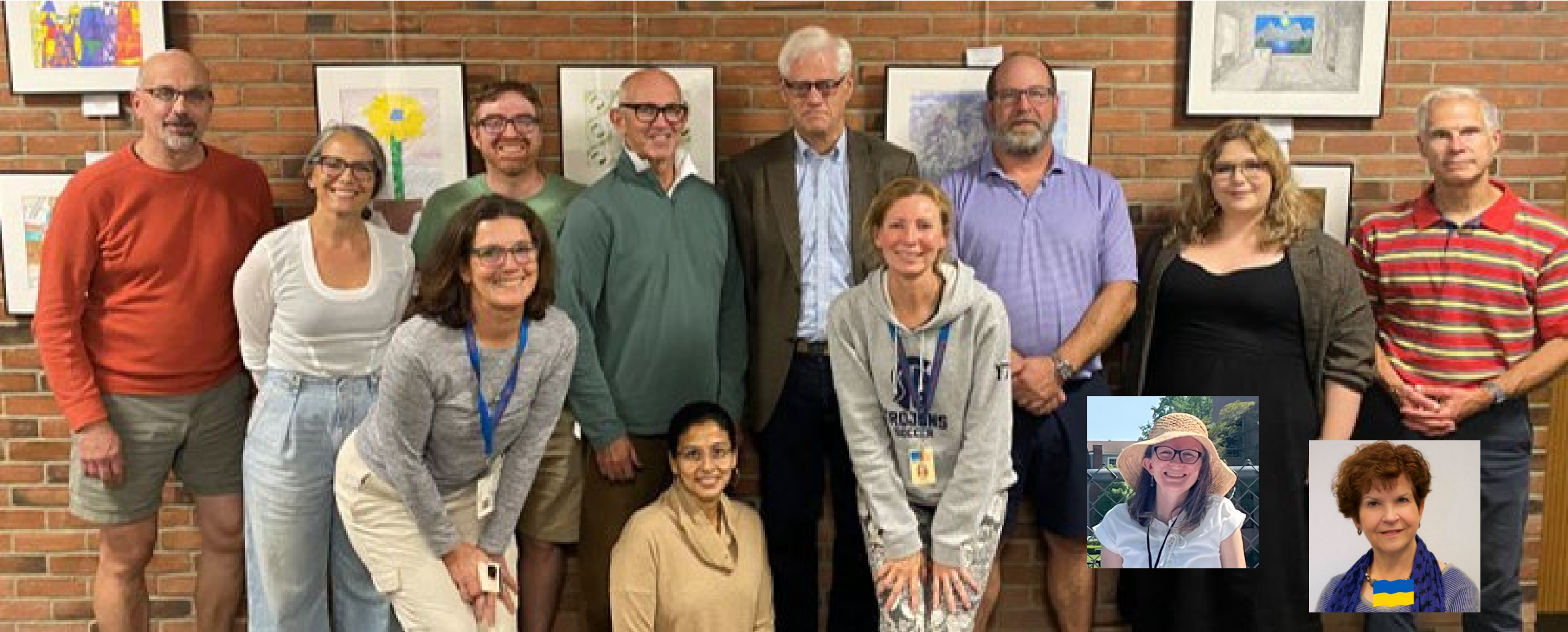
Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.



Sustainable West Hartford Commission

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCIL – DECEMBER 2024





Meet the Commission

Back row: David Sagers (Vice Chair), Kimberly Hughes, Alejandro Paiuk, Jim Fishman, Bernard Pelletier (Chair), Stephen Sack, Christy Matthews, Ted Newton. **Front row:** Katherine Bruns (staff liaison), Aditee Madkekar (resigned Nov 24) Catherine Diviney (staff liaison), Rachael Virgin (resigned Aug 24), Pat Wilson. **Not pictured:** Student Representatives: Nathaniel Goldschmidt (Hall High School), Greta Fedolfi (Conard High School)

Report Contents

- 2024 Year In Review
- Challenges & Opportunities
- 2025 Look Ahead
- Requests
- Appendix – Commission Background & Town Code

2024 Year In Review

WHAT WE DID



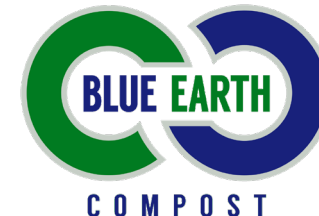
Sustainability in action.



StudioTom



KINGSWOOD
OXFORD



The WEST HARTFORD GARDEN CLUB



SIERRA
CLUB



Partners make it possible.

Key Accomplishments

- Worked on nature-based solutions
 - Led adoption of Pollinator-Friendly Community Resolution
 - Installed Wolcott Park pollinator garden and held “Your Home is Habitat” workshops
- Advanced issues of waste reduction and food scrap diversion
 - Researched options and increased community support for Unit-Based Pricing
 - Worked with staff and Town leaders, resulting in food scrap collection proposals
- Promoted clean energy adoption
 - Ran PowerSmart West Hartford and held West Hartford Electric Showcase
 - Met with developers to incorporate sustainability features into projects
- Contributed 120 points of Town's [Sustainable CT](#) Gold Level Certification
- Organized Earth Day Family Festival

Working Groups

- Created to leverage community expertise
- Expanded commission capacity and volunteer base
- Roughly 45 people actively participated in four working groups:
 - Nature-Based Solutions
 - Waste
 - Energy & Buildings
 - Communications

2024 Year In Review

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS WORKING GROUP

Lead: Kim Hughes

The Nature-Based Solutions Working Group grounded its work in long-term, transformative change, while gaining momentum with successful short-term projects.

- Worked with Leisure Services, WH Garden Club, Grass Roots WH and other partners to advance ARPA-funded projects. Designed and installed pollinator garden at Wolcott Park Children's Forest entrance. Assisted with site prep and facilitated the hiring of a professional consultant for design and installation of Wolcott Meadow.
- With staff and Communications Working Group, drove process to adopt a Pollinator-Friendly Community Resolution: researched examples from other municipalities, drafted language, and managed process for internal review and Town Council approval.
- Held three well-attended, action-oriented "Your Home is a Habitat" educational workshops: two in-person, hands-on workshops, at Westmoor Park and Noah Wester Library, and one virtual webinar hosted by WH Public Library.
- Conducted research and held discussions with the City of Boulder, Colorado, regarding their community-wide, climate action initiative, [Cool Boulder](#), with a view to replicating as Cool West Hartford.
- Began drafting a Native Plant Policy, conducting research on similar policies of municipalities across CT.
- Began developing a process for evaluating and identifying municipal open spaces for suitability for pollinator pathway gardens.



RESOLUTION DESIGNATING WEST HARTFORD A POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

WHEREAS, the Town Council of West Hartford recognizes that bees and other pollinators are vital to maintaining a healthy and resilient ecosystem, supporting a diverse range of essential foods for humans and wildlife consumption; and

WHEREAS, the loss of pollinators is alarmingly high, with populations of native bees and other pollinator populations in decline due to various factors, including habitat loss, land development, land maintenance practices, pesticide use, pathogens, and parasites; and

WHEREAS, there are alternative land management practices available, beyond mowed lawns, that significantly increase pollinator forage; and

WHEREAS, native plantings that offer high-quality forage for pollinators also contribute to water quality treatment, stormwater management, carbon sequestration, noise and pollution reduction, erosion prevention, and soil enhancement; and

WHEREAS, recent scientific research supports the benefits of connecting isolated patches of habitat; and

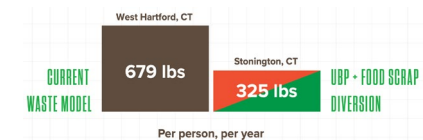
2024 Year In Review

WASTE WORKING GROUP

Lead: Rachael Virgin & Ted Newton

Prior to the Sustainable West Hartford Commission, waste did not have an identifiable “home” within any Town board or commission. Waste has become an increasingly critical topic for Connecticut, and the Waste Working Group met almost weekly from September 2023 to June 2024.

- Learned about different program options to reduce waste and save money.
- Gathered primary research (e.g., resident feedback, participation rates, waste audits) from the Town’s voluntary Morley Neighborhood food scrap + unit-based pricing (UBP) pilot.
- Conducted extensive outreach campaign to provide general education about the waste crisis in Connecticut and to adopt a 1-year town-wide mandatory UBP and food scrap collection program funded by CT DEEP.
- Focused outreach and education with an eye to equity. Created educational materials and videos; presented at churches, ESL classes, libraries community events, and farmers markets; walked neighborhoods with door hangers; spoke to Town Council committees, organized booths for Earth Day Family Festival and Celebrate! West Hartford; and gathered over 600 letters from residents in support of the program.
- Culminated in August 7, 2024, Town Council decision – as a “Committee of the Whole” – not to pursue UBP, but to explore options for food scrap collection only.



2024 Year In Review

ENERGY & BUILDINGS WORKING GROUP

Lead: Bernie Pelletier & Jim Fishman

The Energy & Buildings Working Group continued the ongoing work of the former Clean Energy Commission. It also began exploring ways to accelerate implementation sustainability-related policy and practices as outlined in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

- Ran PowerSmart West Hartford, a 20-week residential community energy campaign with several in-person and virtual workshops to educate and promote solar and battery storage programs.
- Held a successful West Hartford Electric Showcase with Sierra Club of CT, on October 6, 2024, which promoted electric vehicles, e-bikes, lawn equipment and heat pumps, and included participation from Kingswood Oxford students.
- Designated one member to participate in review and selection of architect for the new Elmwood Community Center.
- Held discussions with Town Planner to explore ways to better integrate and accelerate implementation of energy and sustainability concepts into the Town's policy, planning, and review process – e.g., checklists or working with the Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC).
- Monitored progress of 1800 Asylum Ave development and met with architects on August 15, 2024, to get a better understanding of project's sustainable design elements, encourage additional action, and share information on resources and incentive programs.

**POWERSMART
WEST HARTFORD**
Clean Energy. Day & Night.

You can own solar PV panels and an energy storage system that provides zero-fossil-fuel backup power even at night, and especially when the grid goes down!

**FEBRUARY
6
TUESDAY**

**Solar+Storage
INFO SESSION
6:30-7:30PM**

Town Hall, 50 South Main St., Room 400

Attendance in person is encouraged.
For virtual attendance: Live stream the event via YouTube: <https://bit.ly/powersmartwh>

The Town of West Hartford and the Sustainable West Hartford Commission encourage you to attend to hear about great rebates, Federal tax credits and tips on buying and installing solar and/or battery back-up systems.
Residential solar and energy storage at the local level can help "green the grid!"



West Hartford Electric Showcase

**Sunday, October 6, 2024
10 am - 1 pm**

Town Hall Parking Lot

- Learn about electric vehicles, e-bikes, electric lawn care and more from experienced owners and operators!



Sustainability at 1800 Asylum

Virtual meeting (Zoom):
Newman Architects and Building Working Group

NEWMAN



2024 Year In Review

COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

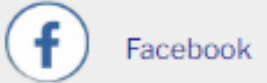
Lead: Christy Matthews & staff liaisons

The Communications Working Group was created to help raise awareness and engage the community in sustainability initiatives by elevating the Commission's profile, supporting other working groups, and exploring more professional marketing strategies with additional tools, resources, and budget.

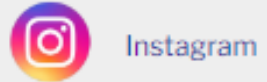
- Drafted Communications Plan to initiate discussion with Town about new marketing and outreach ideas, website, communications channels, and protocols.
- Expanded outreach and engagement via social media (Facebook/Instagram); supported commission and working groups with content creation and regular posting.
- Ran successful Sustainable CT Community Match Fund fundraiser, resulting in donations of \$8,050 for Earth Day Family Festival.
- Held Earth Day Family Festival on April 20, 2024, in partnership with Blue Back Square – with thousands of attendees this was an extremely successful event with live entertainment, family-friendly activities, local vendors, educational booths, and speakers.
- Began creation of “network” of Town sustainability webpages.



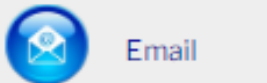
Website



Facebook



Instagram



Email



Impact: 120 Sustainable CT points



Gold Certification



Climate Leader

The Sustainable West Hartford Commission played a pivotal role in completing actions which helped the Town achieve Sustainable CT Gold-level certification and Climate Leader Designation in 2024. These actions accounted for 120 of the 1,085 points that the Town earned.

Action #	Sustainable CT Action
1.1.1	Optimize for Equity – paired with Action 9.2.2
1.1.1	Optimize for Equity – paired with Action 7.7.1
1.2.1	Attend in Sustainable CT Equity Training
3.12.1	Provide education to enhance pollinator pathways
3.12.2	Create native pollinator gardens
3.12.3	Pass a Pollinator Friendly Community resolution
6.4.1	Host a zero-emissions vehicle event
7.7.1	Implement a community energy campaign
8.1.1	Hold a sustainability event
8.4.1	Complete a Community Match Fund project
9.2.1	Build a Unit-Based Pricing Task Force
9.2.2	Conduct Unit-Based Pricing research, analysis & education

Challenges & Opportunities

WE LEARNED A LOT



Progress on sustainability involves balancing many factors.

Perspective

- No roadmap to implementation of existing plans
- No central Town sustainability office or budget
- No regular commission interaction with elected officials or Town leadership
 - Lack of clarity of stakeholder alignment on sustainability
- Identifying challenges allows the opportunity to meet and resolve them

2025 Look Ahead

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Commission Priorities

- **Cool West Hartford** – launch a “branded” climate action-based resident education and engagement initiative
- **Sustainable CT** – build on prior success by supporting implementation of actions
- **Sustainability Action Plan** – develop a long-term plan with professional facilitation and community stakeholder and Town leadership buy-in



Requests

OF TOWN COUNCIL & TOWN MANAGER

5 “asks”

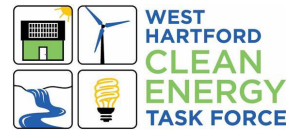
1. Fill vacancies so commission can operate at full strength
2. Provide Town leadership input to current initiatives and long term planning
3. Commit Town resources to:
 - current initiatives (e.g., website support for Cool West Hartford)
 - long-term planning process (e.g., professional facilitation)
 - implementation of existing plans (e.g., POCD, Clean Energy Plan)
4. Develop structure for engagement with Town leadership; options could include:
 - designation of Town Council liaison
 - quarterly informal check-ins with the Public Works, Facilities & Sustainability Committee and Town Manager
5. Identify or rotate staff liaison to support policy/planning and nature-based solutions

Appendix

COMMISSION BACKGROUND & TOWN CODE

Background

CEC



Conservation & Environment Commission* established by ordinance.

1972



Clean Energy Task Force created by resolution. First Energy Plan adopted in 2009.

2005

Ad hoc Clean Energy Task "converted" to Clean Energy Commission by resolution. Second Energy Plan adopted in 2020.

2017

SAG

Sustainability Advisory Group created by resolution and tasked with making recommendations to Town Council, which included creation of a Sustainable West Hartford "team."

2021



Sustainable West Hartford Commission established by ordinance, ostensibly merging Conservation & Environment and Clean Energy Commissions.

2023

[Chapter 5, Article XVI](#)

*Note: Planning & Zoning Commission is designated as West Hartford's Inland Wetlands & Watercourse Agency (IWWA).



Chapter 5, Article XVI § 5-72

The Town Council established a Sustainable West Hartford Commission consisting of 11 electors of the Town for the purpose of:

- promoting practices that lead to greater environmental, social and economic sustainability;
- ensuring a high quality of life for present and future generations by fostering an inclusive, resilient, and thriving community; and
- encouraging the responsible use and conservation of energy and natural resources.

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES



- Identify and prioritize concerns and issues
- Advise and make recommendations
- Collaborate and serve as a resource
- Develop and encourage efforts, relationships and resources for education and action
- Serve as community liaison
- File an annual report

Chapter 5, Article XVI § 5-77