



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

January 5, 2026

7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

SPECIAL MEETING MINTUES

1. Call to Order – 7:07 PM

- ***Jonathan Ferrigno – present***
- ***Kelly Kennedy – present***
- ***Ted Newton – present***
- ***Stephen Sack – absent***
- ***David Sagers – present***
- ***Ally Schoenhorn – absent***
- ***Pat Wilson – present***
- ***Andrea Yuliano – present***
- ***Student Liaison – Mia Magnusson (Hall)***
- ***Staff Liaisons – Catherine Diviney***
- ***Members of the public – Bernie Pelletier, Kim Hughes, Lauren Oken, Parker Walsh, Dan Walsh, Lianne Allen-Jacobson, Sabrina (CoSignCT, remote captioning)***

2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – ***Approved (Yes 6; No 0)***

3. Administrative

- ***Booth for Celebrate West Hartford (June 6-7) – Vote: Commission will reserve/staff a at Celebrate. Approved (Yes 6; No 0). Catherine just got the booth application.***
- ***2026 officers – Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary – Commissioners interested in these positions for 2026, email Catherine. We will vote at the next meeting.***
- ***Thank you to Kim Hughes and Bernie Pelletier for their service to the commission.***
- ***We will have 2 vacancies to fill.***

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

A) For proper closed captioning, we should announce our names before we speak so Sabrina (CoSignCT) can type them in.

B) Public members present were welcomed to the meeting. Lauren Oken had emailed the Sustainable WH Commission to express interest. She was informally invited to all working group meetings tonight.

C) Kim Hughes spoke in support of the Commission sending a letter to the Mayor and Town Council about succession planning at Westmoor Park. Kim highlighted the importance of native plant species in public spaces and encouraged the commission to support the Nature-Based Solutions working group's efforts to get the planting policy in place for the town.

D) Bernie announced before the next Commission meeting at 6PM on 1/26/26, John Phillips (Director of Public Works) will speak about snow operations in room 314 in Town Hall. This event was suggested by Parker Walsh-thank you! This presentation will earn 5 points toward Sustainable CT application. Bernie also mentioned that Bill Gleason from the Tree Action Group will be a guest speaker at the next month's meeting.

5. Ongoing Business

- Working group reports

A) Clean Energy Working Group: *Bernie provided an update on the Energy Working Group, noting that Ally Schoenhorn will be the new leader and discussed ongoing projects including a community-wide research program on network geothermal heating and cooling. Bernie also announced an upcoming "Let's Talk Energy" presentation by Eversource on energy assistance programs, scheduled for January 20th at 11am at the Bishop's Corner Senior Center, which is being held jointly with the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission. Catherine added the information about the Eversource presentation went out through WH Public Schools, which has been a challenge in the past.*

B) Nature Based Solutions: *Andrea/Pat will be leading this group now. Planting policy is stalled within the town feedback framework. Working group will draft a letter inviting Helen Rubino-Turco, Bill Gleason and John Phillips join us for Commission meeting near Arbor Day (Apr 24) to try to move the planting policy forward and discuss the tree canopy study. Planting policy should be in line with town POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development), and it currently is not. The working group expressed frustration about lack of town support for sustainability initiatives, despite having a POCD and Pollinator Friendly Resolution in place. Considering pausing some projects until better buy-in from council members is secured. Dave shared an example of recent town recently backing off efforts to conserve land at corner of Albany Ave and King Phillip Dr. with Land Trust.*

C) Waste Working Group: *Slides reviewed: the food scrap participation savings currently are not enough to offset a food scrap pickup being run through the town. We need more participants to get to the "tipping point". There is a planned tour of the All America Waste's Materials Recovery Facility on Tu 2/3/26 –several town council members have already RSVP'd.*

- Cool West Hartford *The team discussed communication strategies, including one-on-one meetings with town councilors and the development of a website for Cool West Hartford. Kelly shared newsletter statistics, highlighting a good read rate and the success of the Mosquito Bucket Challenge. We outpaced industry average (for non-profit category) for click through rates. We would like to increase readership—maybe at Celebrate WH booth?*

6. New Business

- Report to Town Council: *We will present report in March? Overall discussion of the annual report to the Town Council. Format choices: to provide detailed descriptions from each working group, and/or make the report more persuasive and accessible by including a summary as well. Also to highlight gaps between current and desired outcomes or not? Catherine confirmed that the format is flexible, but emphasized that a report must be provided as per the Commission's resolution. The group agreed to condense and highlight key accomplishments in a more concise format. Working groups need to have pages tentatively prepared and sent over to Dave/Kelly for 1/19 so they can be reviewed at next meeting. Data driven—show results. The group discussed strategies for presenting accomplishments and challenges to town. We would like to have a productive first engagement with the Town Council committee and will maybe make the report the focus of the initial discussion.*
- Working Session: 2026 Goal Setting: *Sustainability is one of the guiding lenses of the POCD which is redone every 10 years. The group explored ways to better integrate sustainability into town decision-making. While sustainability is mentioned in the POCD, it's often not prioritized when decisions involve additional costs or effort. Maybe reaching out to state reps (Tammy Exum and Derek Slap) when we have our upcoming presentations would help us gain some additional visibility. Also discussed: what are the 2026 priorities on the short list for this Commission? We voted on several items last meeting through the Post-It note exercise.*

- Letter Re: Westmoor Park (NBS Group): ***Nature Based Solutions would like to find out more about the succession planning at Westmoor Park, with the director getting ready to retire. Westmoor Park is an important part of the community, and it has potential to be more like other nature centers in the state which have more resources and programming. NBS would like to send a letter of interest (with the commission's approval vote). An initial version of the letter was presented. There was discussion about wording and desire to know of any current Town plans. Pat and Andrea will work on a revision of the letter to be reviewed at the next meeting.***

7. Calendar Updates:

- Tu 1/20/26 – Eversource Let's Talk Energy Presentation, co-host w/ Senior Citizens Advisory Commission, 11AM -12PM @ Bishops Corner Senior Center
- M 1/26/26 – WH Snow Operations Presentation (John Phillips, Director of Public Works), 6-7PM @ Town Hall, Rm 314
- Tu 2/3/26 – Tour of All America Waste's Materials Recovery Facility, 9:30AM @ Berlin, CT. 12 people max. RSVP to Katherine Bruns
- W 3/11/26 – lecture by Dr. Douglas Tallamy @ WH Town Hall Auditorium (+live stream?)
- W 5/13/26 – NBS WG / Sust WH "Less Lawn, More Life" Workshop, 6:30PM @WHPL

8. Agenda for Next Meeting – 1/26/25

- Guest Speaker: Bill Gleason / Tree Action Group
- ***Revision of Letter Re: Westmoor Park***

9. Adjournment

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.