



TOWN OF LEDYARD

Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Chairman Mike
Marelli

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, August 11, 2026

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Hybrid Format

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting was called to order by Chairman Marelli at 6:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present Commissioner Roberta Levandoski
Commissioner Betsy Graham
Chairman Michael E. Marelli
Commissioner Dave Cohen
Commissioner James Harwood
Excused Commissioner Kathleen Edgecomb
Late Commissioner Barbara Kil

Also in attendance:

Ty Lamb, Town Council, serving as the Commission's Liaison.
Bruce Garstka, Agricultural Commission Chairman.

III. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Motion to APPROVE Regular Meeting Minutes from July 14, 2026, as written.

Ms. Kil was not present for this vote.

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Michael E. Marelli

SECONDER: James Harwood

AYE 5 Levandoski Graham Marelli Cohen Harwood

EXCUSED 1 Edgecomb

IV. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Correspondence.

Chairman Marelli shared an email from Christina Hostetler, Town Hall Assistant. The email was a request by Jessica Michaud, Mayoral Assistant looking for a photo for the cover of the Ledyard Events Magazine due by August 12, 2026.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. Public Comments.

Bruce Garstka, Agricultural Commission Chairman said that the Agricultural Commission and the Conservation Commission have a lot of common ground. Mr. Garstka said originally 480R Shewville Road (Loftus property) was deeded to the Town for the sole purpose of a well for the Highlands, but that is no longer the case. Mr. Garstka would like the land to go back to its original owner (Loftus Farm). Councilor Lamb said that the Town Council has placed a vote on the agenda for August 12, 2026, regarding this property.

Chairman Marelli moved the discussion of New Business item 1 (Sale of the 480R Shewville Road) to public comments.

VI. TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

1. Town Council Liaison Report.

Councilor Lamb said that for the Commission to have its voice heard they need to take part in the POCD process. Councilor Lamb will find out the timeline of when input can be accepted.

Councilor Lamb said he believes that Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee is an underused Committee. Councilor Lamb added that what the Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee does ties into what the Conservation Commission does. Maybe the Commission can collaborate with the Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee for input to the POCD.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

VII. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Informational items.

Ms. Graham said the Farmers Market is completely booked for the rest of the 2026 season but the Back to School Bash on August 22 may have still tables available.

Ms. Graham shared a flyer from the Ledyard Youth and Government Board (LYGBA) regarding their poster contest recipients.

Ms. Graham also shared a flyer from the Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed promoting their "Waterfest" on September 19, 2026. Ms. Graham pointed out that on the back of the flyer is information about the Alliance's "Wild Feast" event on October 11 in celebration of Indigenous Peoples Weekend.

Chairman Marelli said he attended the Rotary Club event on August 5 on the upper Town Green. Only three people visited the table.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

VIII. OLD BUSINESS**1. Property Walks.**

Burton Park - Chairman Marelli walked the park and reported it to be in good shape.

Kettlehole - Mr. Harwood walked Kettlehole and found five trees down and blocking multiple areas of the trail. Mr. Harwood went back the next day and took care of the fallen trees. One of the trees was a large 18-inch diameter, for this tree he was only able to remove three feet of it. Mr. Harwood said the Conservation Commission's sign is still in Kettlehole even though it is now the property of Avalonia. It was agreed that the sign should be removed.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

2. Financial Reports.

No changes.

3. Pollinator Pathways Project continued.

Ms. Graham said that Scott Johnson, Parks and Recreation Director, received permission to hire a firm to complete the parking lot construction. The construction cannot begin until the silt fencing is installed and approved after completion. It has been a month, and the fencing installation has not been started. Ms. Graham said her concern is for the plants that have been sitting in post for approximately three years. Approximately \$2,000 worth of plants were donated by ECCD and need to be planted to supplement the riparian buffer. The plants are getting root bound and some are dying. Councilor Lamb will find out the status of the project.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

4. Ledyard Trails Task Force.

Chairman Marelli would like this item to be dropped from the agenda.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

5. Sustainable CT Certification spreadsheet discussion.

Chairman Marelli asked Mr. Harwood if the sustainable certification (Bronze Level) is still in the works. Mr. Harwood said the last item on the to-do list which was an audit walk in Gales Ferry was completed on August 8, 2026. The report will be completed on August 17 and will be submitted for the August 18 deadline. Mr. Harwood said the agenda item can now be removed.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

6. Any Other Old Business to come before the Commission.

Chairman Marelli's shared his list of comments, thoughts and paraphrasing on the current POCD to serve a starting point on the updating process. He asked the Commissioners to review the draft and provide feedback.

Chairman Marelli said he noticed that the Town has a new website and it appears that everything was lost, such as the mission statement. Chairman Marelli asked the Commissioners to visit the new website and to give input on what should be added to the Commission's page.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Sale of 480R Shewville Road.

Chairman Marelli prepared an advisory report that he will present to the Town Council at their meeting on August 12, 2026. Chairman Marelli read this report to the Commission for discussion, comments and a vote.

"I am here representing the Ledyard Conservation Commission to formally present the advisory report voted on and approved by our Commission on Aug. 11, 2026 concerning the sale of 480R Shewville Rd.

The following Powers and Duties of the Commission have been established by Town Ordinance 300-018

There is hereby established a Conservation Commission for the development, conservation, supervision and regulation of natural resources, including water resources, within the territorial limits of the Town of Ledyard. It may make recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission, Inland Wetlands and Water Courses Commission and other municipal agencies on proposed land use changes.

It shall keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands for the purpose of obtaining information on the proper use of such areas, and may from time to time recommend to the Planning and Zoning Commission or, if none, to the Mayor or the Town Council, plans and programs for the development and use of such areas.

The Conservation Commission maintains an index of all open space within the town for the purpose of obtaining information on the proper use of such areas and advises the other Land Use Boards on the proper use of existing and potential open space and use of such areas.

The 2020 Ledyard POCD stated goals:

One of the most significant trends is the growth in land preserved as open space or agricultural land. Efforts should be made to ensure this trend continues and that future open space acquisition and preservation is planned in order to protect natural resources, the environment and the Town's quality of life. A robust effort to conserve open space for agricultural, recreational, watershed, and habitat has seen concrete gains in recent years.

Ledyard has title to a significant amount of acreage. Each parcel of town-owned land

should be examined, and a determination should be made as to whether it should be (a) retained for historic, open space or environmental reasons, (b) retained for future town use, or (c) zoned for development and subsequent sale.

Preserve Open Space - Acquire, protect, conserve, and manage high value open space to protect and sustain habitats, natural resources, and recreation areas.

Protect Water Resources - Protect wetlands, watercourses, and vernal pools from pollution and minimize the impact of impervious surfaces which accelerate run-off and pollution. Protection of these resources benefits both natural habitat as well as critical water supplies.

Diverse water supply systems should be interconnected, both inter and intra-town, in an effort to increase reliability, supply redundancy, and decrease incidents of reduced capacity.

Ensure adequate potable water sources, supplies and distribution systems for Ledyard.

The 2016 Ledyard Water Supply Plan

Protect water quality and implement a source protection strategy through 1) proactive zoning; 2) natural resource-based planning and site design; 3) use of best management practices; and 4) water company review of proposed development projects located within designated source protection areas.

Increase public water supply through an interconnected regional water supply system.

Regulations should be considered that provide for better protection of watershed and aquifer zones. 40% of Ledyard's homes are served by public water and 75% of the region's homes are served by public water.

Two inactive wells at Loftus, deactivated but not yet abandoned, continue to have valid diversion permits that do not expire until 2020 (see Table 1). These could not, however, be reestablished for use within any reasonable period of time for a variety of reasons, including the fact that treatment facilities are planned for near future demolition.

Consideration is being given to the premise that, even if abandoned, it may be prudent to maintain this site as an aquifer protection area, through permitting, for a future emergency supply source.

Future Protective Zones: Because of the Town's current position as a water purchaser from Groton Utilities, there are no immediate plans for setting up future water sources (surface or groundwater) with their contingent protective zones. It will, however, endeavor to maintain the aquifer area and its protective zone around the decommissioned Loftus Well Field in the event of a need for a future alternate supply area.

The Loftus Well Field is a DEEP regulated aquifer protection area

The State of Connecticut's Conservation & Development Policies Plan, 2018 states that preservation and protection of watershed lands is a primary goal of the state, and that treatment technology alone cannot guarantee clean water. Source protection should be implemented in all state-designated public water supply watersheds and aquifer protection overlay zones, and groundwater recharge areas surrounding small community well fields.

Aquifer protection overlay zones should restrict certain uses with potential to contaminate groundwater and establish best management practices for current uses (such as integrated pesticide and herbicide management, hydrocarbon storage, and manure disposal).

The Loftus Well Field is a Natural Diversity area

Ledyard is rich in natural resources. Wetlands, lakes, vernal pools, forests, coastal areas as well as productive farmland soils contribute to the landscape of the community. The natural environment is a primary influence on the quality of life and character of the Town of Ledyard that must be protected. 2020 Ledyard POCD

Open space preservation efforts must be targeted to preserve critical and valuable land and natural resources and maximize open space benefits to the community. Expanding and preserving open space for natural resource and habitat protection. 2020 Ledyard POCD

The Loftus Well Field is also an integral part of the Mystic River Watershed situated at the confluence of the Whitford and Williams Brooks. The entire watershed is listed as a DEEP natural diversity area.

There has been considerable research, planning and work done by various conservation organizations at the local, regional and national level to improve the health of the watershed. Efforts have been made to begin reducing flooding along the watercourse. Improve the watershed's infrastructure to facilitate the resurgence of native anadromous fish. Planning to improve water quality so as support native trout populations and downstream aquaculture activities. The wetlands and stream beds need vegetative borders to protect them as this wooded parcel would provide.

Agriculture is a component of Ledyard's and the greater region's economy and is broadly defined to include the cultivation of the soil, dairying, forestry, raising or harvesting any agricultural or horticultural commodity and as more specifically defined in CGS 1.1q.

Except as otherwise specifically defined, the words "agriculture" and "farming" shall include cultivation of the soil, dairying, forestry, raising or harvesting any agricultural or

horticultural commodity, including the raising, shearing, feeding, caring for, training and management of livestock, including horses, bees, the production of honey, poultry, fur-bearing animals and wildlife, and the raising or harvesting of oysters, clams, mussels, other molluscan shellfish or fish; the operation, management, conservation, improvement or maintenance of a farm and its buildings, tools and equipment, or salvaging timber or cleared land of brush or other debris left by a storm, as an incident to such farming operations; the production or harvesting of maple syrup or maple sugar, or any agricultural commodity, including lumber, as an incident to ordinary farming operations or the harvesting of mushrooms, the hatching of poultry, or the construction, operation or maintenance of ditches, canals, reservoirs or waterways used exclusively for farming purposes; handling, planting, drying, packing, packaging, processing, freezing, grading, storing or delivering to storage or to market, or to a carrier for transportation to market, or for direct sale any agricultural or horticultural commodity as an incident to ordinary farming operations, or, in the case of fruits and vegetables, as an incident to the preparation of such fruits or vegetables for market or for direct sale. The term "farm" includes farm buildings, and accessory buildings thereto, nurseries, orchards, ranges, greenhouses, hoop houses and other temporary structures or other structures used primarily for the raising and, as an incident to ordinary farming operations, the sale of agricultural or horticultural commodities. The term "aquaculture" means the farming of the waters of the state and tidal wetlands and the production of protein food, including fish, oysters, clams, mussels and other molluscan shellfish, on leased, franchised and public underwater farm lands. Nothing herein shall restrict the power of a local zoning authority under chapter 124.

It is stated that the future use of the parcel would be for agriculture. As the statute quoted above shows that the definition of "agriculture" is very broad and includes a great many possible uses.

The parcel is currently wooded. Aerial photos dating from 2023-1990 and 1934 show that the parcel has been wooded and has not been under tillage during the recent past. The Commission can not envision on what agricultural activities there could be, that would not compromise the watershed.

It is the conclusion of the Commission to issue a negative report.
That the sale of 480R Shewville Rd. is not in the best interests of the Town.
The sale is not supported by the Town's POCD or it's Water Supply Plan.
The Commission does not believe that the parcel has no longer any value to the town.
The Commission recommends that the parcel not be sold.

Michael E, Marelli
Chair, Ledyard Conservation Commission"

It was decided to change the second to last sentence to read either;
"The Commission does believe that the parcel has a value to the Town".

OR

"The Commission believes that the parcel remains a great value to the Town".

Motion to APPROVE the advisory report on the sale of 480A Shewville Road with amendment.

RESULT: APPROVED AS AMENDED

MOVER: Michael E. Marelli

SECONDER: James Harwood

AYE 6 Kil Levandoski Graham Marelli Cohen Harwood

EXCUSED 1 Edgecomb

2. Any Other New Business to come before the Commission.
None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to ADJOURN the Regular Meeting at 7:46 p.m.

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Michael E. Marelli

SECONDER: James Harwood

AYE 6 Kil Levandoski Graham Marelli Cohen Harwood

EXCUSED 1 Edgecomb

DISCLAIMER: Although we try to be timely and accurate these are not official records of the Town.