



EAST PROVIDENCE CONSERVATION COMMISSION



2016 Annual Report

Keith Gonsalves, Chair

Contact: Wayne Barnes, East Providence Planning Department

(401) 435-7500, Ext. 11151

wbarnes@cityofeastprov.com

The East Providence Conservation Commission is an active volunteer group of City residents whose duties are “to promote and develop the City’s natural resources, to protect its watershed resources and to preserve natural esthetic areas, open spaces, woodlands, fields and streams, and recreational areas within the City”, per the Revised Ordinances of the City of East Providence.

There were some Commission membership changes in 2016 as long-time chair Lorraine Nik stepped down, as did Marie Esten who had been with us for a number of years. Both were thanked for their commitment to the Commission and assistance with our projects. Early in the year, Cheryl Vieira was welcomed to the group and has become a valuable and enthusiastic Commission member.



Earth day clean-up pile

For at least the fifth year, the Commission participated in Earth Day activities in April with the support of the City’s Recycling Division. A tree was planted along the Bike Path at Boyden Heights in memory of late Commission member John Rose, and the group worked with members of the Providence County Hiking Club on a beach clean-up at this location on April 23rd. About a dozen full bags of trash were collected along with a couple of tires and pallets, all of which were then removed for disposal by the Department of Public Works.

National Trails Day activities at the Hunts Mills Historic Site on June 4th included the planting of several native shrubs along with relatively minimal trail maintenance. A testament to the work performed by the City, the Commission, and the Ten Mile Watershed Council in recent years is that with the increase in passive recreational use, the trail now tends to “maintain itself” through local user stewardship. The Commission will continue to perform minor upgrades at this site including erosion control and mitigating the spread of invasive plants directly along the trail.



Commission member Cheryl Vieira and assistant plant mountain laurel on National Trails Day.

A major accomplishment for 2016 was the completion of trail brochures for four City properties; Willett Pond, Boyden Heights, Hunts Mills, and the Turner Reservoir area. A single larger brochure was also developed which includes all four trail systems. Each brochure includes trail highlights and historic information along with the actual trail map. These are available on the Commission's webpage, on our Facebook™ page, and in the Planning Department.



Display tables at Hunts Mills Art Festival

The Watershed Council joined the Commission in setting up display tables at the East Providence Arts Council's Hunts Mills Art Festival on June 26th, and the Commission offered a guided hike of the trail. A number of area residents stopped by to pick up trail maps, and viewed the fish ladder at the Hunts Mills Dam. Trail hikes were also offered at Hunts Mills and at Boyden Heights late in the summer in conjunction with Rhode Island Land Trust Days. Ten people joined us at Boyden Heights on August 20th. Nearly 30 people attended the Hunts Mills Hike on September 11th, most of whom also toured the historic John Hunt House.

The success of the September 11th Hunts Mills event prompted a continuing informal collaboration with the East Providence Historical Society, who have invited us to offer a hike at the Hunts Mills trail on the second Sunday of each month when the Hunt House is opened to the public. The Commission agreed to arrange for this on a trial basis, weather and ground conditions permitting. The Hunts Mills site also falls within the National Park Service Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor and will become a one of the locations that is featured as part of this regional initiative.



Commission members and others from the community participated a volunteer effort coordinated by the Planning Department to complete a major landscape project at the new Honor Flight Park at Jones Pond, near Pierce Stadium. Work on two Saturdays in October included installation of over 800 native plants, weeding, and mulching within several large planting beds. The new passive recreation facility is a fine addition to the City's park inventory and will be dedicated in the Spring of 2017.



Landscape plan review ahead of Honor Flight Park/Jones Pond landscape project



Park view after completion of landscaping and hydroseeding.

In November, the Commission hosted an excellent presentation from Amanda Freitas of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management on the new Rhode Island Wildlife Action Plan. The Plan contains a wealth of information that will help to inform Commission activities and other local initiatives including the City's Comprehensive Plan.

One of the Commission's projected efforts for early spring is the planting of milkweed seed on certain suitable public properties, in particular, along the waterfront, to ensure a good supply of food for the grubs of monarch butterflies that are so important for crop pollination and, in themselves, are objects of striking natural beauty.

The Conservation Commission looks forward to a busy 2017 serving the City of East Providence and welcomes interested members of the community and other conservation interests to our meetings, which are scheduled on the third Tuesday of each month (unless otherwise noticed) at 6:30 pm at East Providence City Hall. The Commission also invites interested residents to join our group as Commission members as openings become available; contact City Liaison Wayne Barnes using the contact information above. Meeting agendas are posted in the lobby of City Hall, with agendas and minutes of past meetings available on the RI Secretary of State's webpage and on the Conservation Commission webpage found on the City's website, www.eastprovidence.com/conservation.

Respectfully Submitted,

East Providence Conservation Commission

Keith Gonsalves, Chair

James Boyd, Secretary

John Burrige

Ernie Germani

Cheryl Vieira

Wayne Barnes, City Liaison

