

Natural Heritage, Open Space, and Watershed Land Acquisition Review Board

Regular Meeting (via Zoom/teleconference)

January 13, 2022

Minutes

Board members present: Karen Burnaska, Linda Francois, Joe Gresko, Eric Hammerling (Co-Chair), Walker Holmes, Amy Paterson (Co-Chair), Elanah Sherman, John Triana, and Joe Welsh (all by Zoom except Elanah, who attended by phone)

DEEP representatives: Allyson Clarke, Property Agent; Nicole Lugli, Director, Office of Planning and Program Development

Guest: Sylvie Boucher, Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow, Connecticut Land Conservation Council; Catherine Rawson, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy

Welcome and Introductions

Eric called the meeting to order at 10:32 AM.

Approval of December 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Amy, seconded by John, the Minutes were unanimously approved, with Walker abstaining.

DEEP Staff Updates:

Status of 2021 OSWA/UGCG applications and available funding

All current applications arrived by mid-November. Allyson, Nicole, and Andrew Hoskins (Chief of Staff) have looked at them; they will soon be sent on to the appropriate internal DEEP group. Nicole expects that DEEP will forward decisions to the Review Board by this April.

Two environmental analyst positions, including one devoted to Land Acquisition and Management (LAM), plus a paralegal, have been posted. The seasonal position for the Green Plan is not yet in place. Andrew has been briefed on the OSWA application process, with the expectation that schedules will get back on track for the next round. Bond funding is available for the current round.

Staff transition for LAM

Nicole confirmed that this will be her last Review Board meeting and that Andrew (along with Allyson) will attend starting in February. Her position has not yet been drafted or posted. In answer to a question

from Eric, Nicole gave assurance that her retirement will be followed by a smooth transition that includes the participation of different units, including Energy. She added that Camille Fontanella will be the point person on STEPS (Sustainable, Transparent, and Efficient Practices initiative). LAM will remain in the Planning Division and report to Andrew. Nicole also confirmed that one of the new positions will include LWCF (Land and Water Conservation Fund) oversight. Eric asked Nicole if Andrew could provide a work chart showing the interlocking of positions; he also reiterated (from previous meetings) the appreciation of the Review Board for Nicole's service.

Business

Update on OSWA/UGCG Working Group Memo:

Eric noted that, as the group has not yet completed its review of the UGCG program, today's update would be limited to the group's highly comprehensive evaluation of OSWA. Before sharing slides, Amy said the group's consensus is to seek administrative, rather than statutory, remediation of identified problems whenever possible. Allyson made three substantive suggestions in response to the discussion: 1) statutory revision will be necessary to open the UGCG program to nonprofit applicants; 2) any justice-related language addition should use the currently preferred "environmental justice and equity;" 3) in regard to the mobility equipment exemption, substitute "related equipment" for the suggested "other similar equipment" in order to clarify the limitation. Amy closed the discussion by saying she will speak with Joe Gresko regarding possible legislative recommendations.

Green Plan: Tabled

Plan for 2022 Annual Report (due February 15): Tabled

Public Comment

No public comment

Adjournment

The meeting ended at 12 PM with no motions.

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

Next meeting: The date of the next meeting was not announced.