

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom)

November 9, 2023

Minutes

Review Board members present: Tim Abbott, Karen Burnaska, Joe Gresko, Linda Francois, Walker Holmes, Amy Paterson (Chair), Elanah Sherman, John Triana, Joe Welsh, and Michelle Williams (all by video except Elanah, who attended by phone)

DEEP representatives: Allyson Clarke, Property Agent; Cameron Clegg, Environmental Analyst; Andrew Hoskins, Chief of Staff; Lindsay Suhr, Director, LAM Office

Guests: Justine Phillips-Gallucci, CT Careers Trainee (CCT) Planning Analyst, OPM (representing Review Board member Rebecca Dahl); Catherine Rawson, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy

Welcome and Introductions

Amy called the meeting to order at approximately 10:30 AM.

Approval of September 14, 2023 Regular Meeting and September 28 Special Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Karen, seconded by Tim, the Regular Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved. On a motion by Tim, seconded by Karen, the Special Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved.

DEEP Staff Updates

Grant applications: Allyson reported that, of 17 OSWA applications, only one new applicant (Aton Forest, Norfolk) had submitted an application. (There were two UGCG grant applications.) The total amount requested is \$15,000,000. Allyson added that grant awards would be announced in Spring, 2024.

Green Plan: Lindsay said that DEEP still plans to hire a contractor. The RFP will be released by the end of this year, with a finish deadline of late Spring, 2024. (She added that the GIS unit at OPM has agreed to assume some of the consulting workload.) The consultants will provide fine detail by approaching the COGS, land trusts, municipalities, and spaces/entities not captured by GIS. Lindsay wants to begin conversation about outreach, especially to

unserved/underserved groups, by this coming January. Amy offered the help of the Review Board in outreach, adding that DEEP will be conducting presentations on funding programs to CEEJAC. (Yaw chairs the Land sub-committee.)

Other: Walker suggested that open space data be added to Sustainable CT scoring. Tim resurrected the idea that City Clerks mail a second copy of easement/deed filings to DEEP. Amy responded that the Clerks have been resistant to this added step and suggested the alternative of DRS transmitting the information to DEEP. On another topic, Amy announced that the State GIS Office now has a web page and produces a newsletter.

Updates: Review Board Membership

Confirmed so far: Tim, Linda (via email), John, Joe G, Karen, Joe W, and Michelle. Amy thanked Joe G. for guiding nominations to the correct authorities. (Both municipal categories of membership are still open.)

Discussion: Community Investment Act funding for OSWA and UGCG

According to Amy, State Senator Cathy Osten convened a meeting of CIA advocates to discuss increasing the CIA fee. She requested the advocates to ask their respective agencies how they would use the additional revenue. A group discussion ensued. Review Board members put forward several ideas for use of the funding, including: creation of greater accessibility for people with disabilities; assistance with grant writing; improved promotion, especially to urban entities; dedicated due diligence fund for environmental justice/distressed communities; park restoration and facilities development, including purchase of new land; policy change allowing nonprofits to apply for these funds; planning expenses; acquisition in distressed municipalities, including remediation costs; additional LAM staff; Green infrastructure and passive recreation trails. (The last suggestion was in response to the tremendous over-subscription to the Recreational Trails Grants Program.)

Review Board Member Updates

Upcoming webinars: Karen announced a webinar on preservation of MDC land, and Catherine announced the webinar “Conserving Northwest Connecticut – Adaptive Strategies for Accelerating the

Pace of Conservation.” Amy will put links to both events in the Chat. Amy said CLCC is still accepting presentation proposals for their March, 2024 conference.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

With no motions, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 11:47 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

Chat and Glossary appended.

Next meeting: Thursday, December 14, 2023, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM.