

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom)

December 14, 2023

Minutes

Review Board members present: Tim Abbott, Karen Burnaska, Rebecca Dahl, Linda Francois, Joe Gresko, Walker Holmes, Amy Paterson (Chair), Elanah Sherman, John Triana, and Joe Welsh (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; and Jamie Sydoriak, Environmental Analyst

Guests: Yaw Owuso Darko, Senior Project Specialist, CLCC; Shelley Harms, Executive Director, Salisbury Association Land Trust, and Co-President, Norfolk Land Trust; Victoria Jaskaran, Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow, CLCC; Justine Phillips-Gallucci, CT Careers Trainee (CCT) Planning Analyst, OPM

Welcome and Introductions

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

Approval of November 9, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

DEEP Staff Updates

Grant applications: Staff is prepping for internal review and scoring in early 2024. Cameron is working with Allyson to develop a more streamlined review process.

Green Plan: Lindsay met with Becca to discuss a collaboration with OPM on the GIS component of the Green Plan. Lindsay expects that DEEP will have details before the end of 2023.

Other: 1) Two new LAM positions have been approved (Property Manager and a position to administer LWCF). They will be posted in January. 2) Senator Osten has been soliciting ideas for how to use the possible increase in recording fees. Amy is participating in these conversations and will keep the Review Board informed.

Updates: Review Board Membership

Elanah, Amy, and Karen have been reappointed via letter; Linda has received reappointment notification via email, but not letter; Walker is still waiting. Joe G will follow up. The Review Board will discuss vacancies at the January meeting. Joe G said he will approach Environment Committee members regarding municipal nomination ideas. In this connection, Elanah said she has a possible candidate from eastern Connecticut to represent smaller municipalities. In response to a question from Elanah, Amy said that designees of Chief Elected Officials are, as a matter of course, acknowledged as members. Amy went on to thank Joe G for his substantial help facilitating the nomination and reappointment processes.

Update: Community Investment Act

Tabled

Review of OSWA Scoring Criteria

This was a long and discursive discussion, during which the Review Board's devoted Secretary was able to only capture limited elements (and, generally, without reference to relevant scoring sections). Happily, Amy also took notes, which should help during forthcoming conversations on the topic.

Amy displayed a screen with criteria. Tim asked if an entity headquartered in another state but seeking to purchase CT land would be eligible for funding. Allyson answered that the entity would be eligible. Lindsay suggested that the application provide mapping resources. Amy asked that Review Board members come to the next meeting with suggestions for such resources.

Linda said that alphabetization would be more organizationally useful than the present bullet points. Linda also suggested that, in Section 2 (Administrative), the last capital 'OR' should be removed.

Re letters of support: Several members opined that support from legislators should contribute to the score. Another member commented that the word 'local' creates ambiguity. Walker said that the power dynamics implicit to letters of support could create barriers for non-traditional applicants; Joe G concurred.

Tim suggested that trail connectivity increase a score; Elanah expressed concern that connectivity may create a disadvantage for applications from distressed municipalities. Amy responded that an

applicant should be able to make up points in other areas, thus obviating any disadvantage.

Other

Amy said the January agenda will include discussion of work plans for 2024.

Lindsay added that, at this same meeting, she will bring up for discussion outreach strategies for the Green Plan and the OSWA/UGCG programs.

Review Board Member Updates

Tabled

Public Comment

(Guests participated during the body of the meeting.)

Adjournment

With no motions, the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

Glossary appended.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 11, 2024, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM via Zoom (a new link will be provided for 2024)