

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom/teleconference)

December 8, 2022

## Minutes

**Review Board members present:** Tim Abbott, Karen Burnaska, Rebecca Dahl, Joe Gresko, Eric Hammerling (Co-Chair), Walker Holmes, Amy Paterson (Co-Chair), Elanah Sherman (all by Zoom except Elanah, who attended by phone)

**DEEP representatives:** Allyson Clarke, Property Agent; Cameron Clegg, Environmental Analyst, LAM; Andrew Hoskins, Chief of Staff

**Guests:** Shelley Harms, Executive Director, Cornwall Conservation Trust and Salisbury Association Land Trust; Yaw Owusu Darko, Project Specialist, Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC); Aaron Lefland, Deputy Director, CLCC; Catherine Rawson, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Eric called the meeting to order at 10:32 AM. Eric announced that Rebecca Dahl, Planning Analyst at OPM, has replaced Eric Lindquist as the OPM representative on the Review Board. Rebecca has significant experience in land use and preservation, including her time at CLCC as Community Engagement Specialist.

### **Approval of November 10 Meeting Minutes**

On a motion by Tim, seconded by Karen, the Minutes were unanimously approved pending a correction on pg.3. (The name of the referenced CLCC grant is 'transaction assistance,' not 'transitional.')

### **DEEP Staff Updates**

Status of 2020 and 2021 Annual Reports: Amy and Eric received drafts yesterday. They will send out a Google page for comments; Review Board members will have one week to submit their comments after receipt. The next Annual Report is due in February 2023.

Updating 2016-2020 Green Plan: Allyson reported that Cameron has been working on the Green Plan. Also assisting will be

the new LAM Office Director, Lindsay Suhr, who will start at the beginning of 2023. Cameron said that Lindsay's background is a huge asset in the development of the Green Plan. Amy and Eric applauded the hiring of Lindsay.

OSWA Grant Submission Update/Other Funding/Program News: Cameron and Jamie are working on technicalities, including the development of numerous links for applicant use. One of the goals of their efforts will be to make scoring easier. Amy asked if DEEP plans to announce the new round at the same time the awards are announced; Allyson replied that she does not know yet if that is feasible.

Status of DEEP's Proposal for Technical Corrections to C.G.S. Sec. 7-131d for 2023 Legislative Session: Amy said she hopes to see the proposal soon. She will keep Review Board members posted (in between meetings, if necessary).

Other: Joe G expressed hope that a definition of open space will be included in the 2023 agency bill. Amy agreed that the more uniformity in language the better. In this connection, Rebecca asked if DEEP has contacted the OPM GIS Office. Cameron said he doesn't think any contact has been made. Eric asked if DEEP has established an internal calendar for public comment. Cameron responded that he is working with Jamie on a calendar; that process includes research into past and newer methodologies. Amy and Eric offered the support and expertise of the Review Board in creating an expanded effort to solicit public comment.

### **Review Board Administration**

Status of Appointments: Amy asked that any members who are interested in stepping down contact her. In answer to a question from Karen, Amy said that if a term has expired, there is no need to take immediate action. Joe G, however, suggested that legislative appointees whose terms have expired contact him for referral to the appropriate person. Amy noted that the Review Board still has vacancies.

List of Acronyms - Elanah said she is working on a glossary of acronyms that will enable the Minutes to be more intelligible to non-experts interested in land preservation. DEEP has offered to assist.

### **Discussion: 2023 Review Board Work Plan**

Special update on steps to address “Appraiser Crisis “ - Elizabeth Moore, Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT):  
Elizabeth said she has been exploring this issue for the past year. She announced that an anonymous foundation is interested in funding an easement certification course at a vastly reduced fee. The Appraisal Institute would present the course in D.C. Elizabeth said she is pursuing funding to offset travel and accommodation costs. Elizabeth mentioned other upcoming trainings, including one in Boston. Allyson said that the Appraisal Foundation offers classes on Yellow Book, but that more (and less costly) classes are needed. She added that Tom Henry is willing to coach appraisers on how to conduct reviews. Amy noted the importance of reaching out to existing appraisers about the availability of consulting, plus the urgency of creating a pipeline into the profession for younger people.

Create a list of recommendations for the new Green Plan, administrative changes, upcoming budget negotiations, and legislative changes for 2024: Amy said the agenda for the 2023 working group will concentrate on improving programs. Walker’s research on other states will provide needed context and ideas.

### **Review Board Member Updates**

Eric welcomed Rebecca Dahl (see above) to the Review Board.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment

### **Adjournment**

On a motion from Amy, seconded by Karen, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 11:45 AM.

**Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary**

**Next meeting: Thursday, January 12, 2023, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM**