

NHOSWLA Review Board 4/14/22 Minutes

Attendees:

Joe Gresko
Eric Hammerling
Amy Paterson
Catherine Rawson
Tim Abbott
John Triana
Eric Lindquist
Andrew HOskins
Linda Francois
Walker Holmes
Allyson Clarke

Minutes approved: 1st: _____ 2nd: _____
Eric Lindquist abstained.

Happy Birthday Tim Abbott!

Legislative update from Joe Gresko

- House passed HB5291
- Senate passed pesticide notification bill, coming to house next.
- Bonding: trails/greenways extra 3M got referred to finance. Will be included in bond bill. Extra 5M OSWA for each year also will be included in bond bill. DEEP could administer extra money in 2 grant rounds or just one. HB 5296 will die, but it will be written into bond package bill that will get passed separately.
- Tim Abbott asked about use of ARPA funds; Joe said it's back and forth time on budget and appropriations. He is always lobbying for additional money for DEEP going forward.
- Clarification on HB5037, which diverts 20M from CIA and puts it back into four sectors. Any additional info on Community Investment Act: Appropriations budget has 20M being spent out of CIA for multiple uses allowed (open space, farmland preservation, anaerobic digesters in eastern ct, affordable housing) - Joe thought might be a raid and put into general fund b/c promised tax relief can't come from ARPA. Didn't happen, this 20M will be used for CIA appropriate things. OPM said \$24M in CIA now.
- \$24M OPM says available: includes \$ committed to grants but not obligated. Not sure if the actual amount left is known.

CT DEEP update from Andrew Hoskins:

- Proposed changes to application and scoring sheet: goal not to make substantive changes. Allyson recently reviewed last year's application, noted discrepancies in scoring and what is being asked for; including/clarifying definitions.

- 2022 Annual Report: hopeful can be completed in the coming weeks/month. Board members and conservation community uses these reports to advocate for the state open space program - they are useful and utilized regularly.
- Green Plan: Pursuing opportunity to engage a consulting firm pro bono; could result in a high-quality plan.
 - Tim Abbott: we need a Green Plan that aligns with current planning and zoning trends/actions/practices, especially the content of Public Act 2129. Amy: changes to application/scoring are a start here.
- Hiring: Office Director candidates are under review, interviews to be scheduled in next 3-4 weeks. Two Environmental Analyst 1 positions - candidates selected, interviews in scheduling now.

OSWA Application changes - comments from board members (tracked by Amy in the document during the discussion):

- Tim: “accessible to the public without limitation” may need bullet points to provide more info (not saying public can do whatever/wherever). Andrew: suggest tabling for future revision, as may require legal review. Eric L: agrees, clarification needed. Eric H: remove first sentence?
- Linda: recreational uses paragraph clarification needed – many users may have maintenance vehicles, no need to specify water companies here in this recreational vehicle paragraph.
- Amy: recreational uses paragraph - add e.g. or “for example”
- Core forest definition
- “Recent” title search - add definition of recent (unless triggers legal review). Tim: Title work requiring copy is an unfunded mandate and it’s for a thing that doesn’t need to be done until after the award. Not required - but gives more points. Allyson guesses that 80% of applicants provide title certificate when they apply. Allyson finds it helpful to note if there is a CE or other instrument recorded. Good to have done before survey to note red flags down the line. Linda: good to encourage people to do title searches early, prevents problems later before they (or DEEP) invests lots of time and money.
- Potential for ambiguity on signage “clearly visible from roadway”
- EJ and Equity section: Underscores future need for parallel applications
- Multi-family housing: Y/N wording is problematic here. Ask applicants to tell the story of how conservation came to be the goal for this land? Could allow for multiple equity considerations to be explained. Linda: for now, say “explain whether...”
- Add that Commissioner has discretion in timeline.

OSWA Scoring sheet - comments from board members (tracked by Amy in the document during the discussion)

- Only one application per applicant.
- Encouraging applicants to turn back funds for projects that have died. Eric L: special considerations clause?

- Copy of statement showing stewardship fund - broad? What if you have a fundraising plan but haven't raised money yet?
- Forest resource management: implies active management. Aim for neutral language. Management for endangered species/habitat could be necessary. John Triana: suggest giving the owner/grant recipient latitude....suppose a land trust or city buy a small parcel that is dominated by ailanthus or Norway maple and they want to remove them to promote native species.

CT DEEP will take comments, move toward announcing next round.

Applications under review

- OSWA:
Scenario 1: 7.8M, fully fund no cap.
Scenario 2: cap at \$750k
- UGCG:
\$276K, all in line with program intent, traditional.
- CIA/Bond funding available to support all.
- Monitoring the trends: Last year's small grants caused fewer applications this year. This year's large grants will likely spur more/larger applications next year. Careful messaging needed to explain the variations in funding. Review board to focus on increasing funding in future years so as to disrupt the boom/bust cycle.