

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom)

May 11 2023

Minutes

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

DEEP representatives: Allyson Clark, Property Agent; Cameron Clegg, Environmental Analyst; Lindsay Suhr, Director, LAM Office

Guest: Julia Rogers, Senior Land Protection Manager, Housatonic Valley Association

Welcome and Introductions

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

Approval of April 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes

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

DEEP Staff Updates

2022 Annual Open Space Report to Environment Committee:
Lindsay sent the Report to Review Board members shortly before the beginning of today's meeting. May 26 is the comment deadline.

Updating 2016-2020 Green Plan: Lindsay reported that a DEEP group has had several good meetings, with at least two more planned. At the end of the meeting process, the group will create an RFP. She added that 2024 would be dedicated to data collection, with document publication expected in 2025. In answer to a question from Amy, Lindsay said a key contribution by the Review Board would be development of an open space definition. Eric suggested that public comment be sought earlier rather than later; Lindsay responded that she plans to review the old Green Plan to decide which breakout topics would be most helpful. Amy suggested that the Review Board start brainstorming soon about possible future working groups and volunteered CLCC for outreach efforts. Karen advised that the COGS be contacted early on, especially regarding definitional issues.

Lindsay replied that her Office is already in communication with the COGs. Joe G recommended outreach to regional land conservation groups, and Linda suggested that communication include quotable and succinct sound bites. Amy commented that the Green Plan should address collaboration and connection among land trusts.

OSWA Grant Review Update/Other Funding/Program News:
Lindsay said the grant round announcement was released yesterday. October 2 is the closing date, with an additional month for appraisal review. Amy noted a need for more and better program promotion, including regional events. She also suggested ongoing evaluation of application criteria.

Status SB 1146, Sections 10 and 11: DEEP's proposal for technical corrections to C.G.S. Sec 7-131d(c)(3) and 7-131g: No DEEP update. Joe G identified SB 1146 as his priority and said he sees no apparent issues. He reported that benchmarking of OSWA and Greenway funding has not been included; in that connection, he added that the relevant Chairs have promised to double the amount annually. He urged Review Board members to contact their legislators in support of HB 6486, on tire recycling.

Old Business: 2023 Review Board Work Plan

Update from Open Land Definition Working Group (OLD WG):
The group will complete its work after one or two additional meetings. Lindsay remarked that the direction is to broaden, rather than contract, the definition; she added that this broadening should enable identification of lands that are actually used as open space. She said the definition would include an acknowledgement of vulnerabilities.

Looking ahead at next tasks: See discussion on Green Plan under DEEP Staff Updates..

Other

Drought Management Webinar: Karen announced that a link to the April 23 webinar, "Preparing for Drought in Connecticut," is now available in a DEEP link.

2023 Legislative Session Updates: See bill status discussion, above, under DEEP Staff Updates.

Review Board Member Updates

Eric announced that Trails day registration opened yesterday; he will put the link in the Chat. Amy reminded Review Board members that the CLCC photo contest deadline is June 1. Amy also reported that the recent tour of the Hamden water treatment plant was very successful.

Public Comment Julia advised that the Green Plan include connectivity goals from both the aquatic and terrestrial perspectives.

Adjournment

On a motion by Joe T, seconded by Joe G, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 11:22 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

Chat is appended.

Next meeting: Thursday, June 8, 2023, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM