

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom)

June 8, 2023

Minutes

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

DEEP representatives: Cameron Clegg, Environmental Analyst; Lindsay Suhr, Director, LAM Office

Guests: Shelley Harms, Executive Director, Cornwall Conservation Trust and Salisbury Association Land Trust; Justine Phillips-Gallucci, CCT Planning Analyst, OPM; Catherine Rawson, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy

Welcome and Introductions

Eric called the meeting to order at 10:34 AM.

He introduced guest Justine Phillips-Gallucci, a recent graduate of Yale School of the Environment and former Environmental Justice Intern at DEEP.

Approval of May 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Amy, seconded by John, the Minutes were unanimously approved with one abstention.

DEEP Staff Updates

2022 Annual Open Space Report to Environment Committee:
Lindsay reported that the Report has been posted on the website. She added that some of the comments contributed by Review Board members had been incorporated into the final version.

Updating 2016-2020 Green Plan: Work is contingent upon consensus on a definition of open space.

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: Amy announced that the technical corrections passed. She and Eric

acknowledged the essential support of Andrew Hoskins and Linda Francois, and added that Joe Gresko's efforts were instrumental in passage.

Other: Lindsay announced that DEEP is seeking funding for at least two new positions, with Highlands and LWCF as possible sources. One position would be in Acquisitions; prospective new funding may also be directed to a seasonal position and to consultants.

Old Business: 2023 Review Board Work Plan

Review Definition of Open Space (OLD WG): Lindsay reviewed the work group's process, which focused on development of a definition that could be used to gauge the open space percentage and set new goals. She said she has presented the proposed definition to DEEP Acquisition staff and will be presenting it to the legal team. Because the definition is broad, Linda asked if it would embrace very built-up environments, like stadiums. Lindsay responded that one goal of broadening the definition was to ensure that it applies to urban parks, which more restrictive definitions have excluded. Linda agreed that the 'passive recreation' standard in other definitions has been overly restrictive. Lindsay added that the definition draft echoes present statutory language on recreation. Eric predicted that the definition will be "nuanced out" as it is used by the Green Plan consultant; in another context, he also mentioned that the definition's adjunct material includes a scale of vulnerabilities regarding protected/preserved status. Karen voiced strong support of the work group's approach in terms of both the definition itself and the inclusion of vulnerabilities.

Looking Ahead at Next Tasks: Lindsay said she would send a Google doc of the definition to Review Board members and LAM staff; after that, she will reach out to the COGS and, possibly, land trusts. She anticipates that the RFP for a Green Plan consultant will go out by early fall. Catherine and Linda asked if the definition includes municipal land used as open space even when protections are not in place. Eric assured them that, parallel to statute, such lands are included. Rebecca confirmed the value in creating a uniform definition that will be useable by all the COGS and OPM. She

added that, following all approvals, she will set up a meeting with an OPM/COG group to address the definition.

2023 Legislative Session Recap

Joe Gresko was greeted with a round of applause when he entered the meeting. Amy thanked him for his text updates the previous day. Among the bills that passed were SB 1147, An Act Concerning the Environmental Justice Program of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and HB 6486, which holds tire producers responsible for appropriate recycling. The climate bill was killed. The benchmark proposal (for embodying increased funding in statute) was not passed, but Joe was assured that relevant Chairs plan to do the same manually on an annual basis. The OSWA program received 10 million dollars.

Review Board Member Updates

On Friday, June 9 at 9:00 am, the Watershed Lands Work Group will meet via Zoom. Rebecca will send out links.

Eric announced that he is leaving CFPA (and the Review Board) to become the Director of DEEP's Office of Planning and Development. (Clare Cain will become CFPA Interim Director.) This will be his last meeting. Review Board members expressed chagrin at losing Eric, but great enthusiasm for the contributions he is sure to make at DEEP.

Rebecca noted that today is Amy's birthday!

Public Comment

Shelley commented favorably on the DEEP 2022 Annual Open Space Report and on the amount of OSWA funding. Justine said she was very interested to learn about the work to create a uniform definition of open space.

Adjournment

On a motion by Amy, seconded by Linda, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

Chat is appended.

Next meeting: Thursday, July 13, 2023, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM