

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom)

July 13, 2023

Minutes

Review Board members present: Tim Abbott, Karen Burnaska, Rebecca Dahl, Linda Francois, Joe Gresko, Walker Holmes, Amy Paterson (Chair), and Elanah Sherman, (all by video except Elanah, who attended by phone)

DEEP representatives: Andrew Hoskins, Chief of Staff; Lindsay Suhr, Director, LAM Office

Guests: Shelley Harms, Executive Director, Cornwall Conservation Trust and Salisbury Association Land Trust; Justine Phillips-Gallucci, CT Careers Trainee (CCT) Planning Analyst, OPM

Welcome and Introductions

Amy called the meeting to order at 10:35 AM.

Approval of June 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Joe G, seconded by Karen, the Minutes were unanimously approved with two abstentions.

DEEP Staff Updates

Updating 2016-2020 Green Plan: Lindsay reported that the new open space definition has been drafted, and that she and Amy are conducting outreach on the definition to land trusts and COGs. She expects that DEEP will hire consultants by the end of August to move forward with data collection; that Green Plan goals will be set in early 2024; and that the Plan will be completed at the end of that year.

Outreach re OSWA, UGCG, and other funding opportunities: Lindsay announced that DEEP has conducted information sessions with CLCC for land trusts and the COGs. Amy added that CLCC has established twice-a-month informal information sessions to which people have been showing up. In August, CLCC will be offering lunchtime topical roundtables, including one on surveys. In addition to

DEEP funding sources, these information sessions will address funding through the EPA Long Island Sound Study and NOAA.

Discussion: Recreational activities on OSWA-protected properties

A primary topic of the discussion was how to determine if an activity is permissible on property defined as open space. After much anecdotal conversation, Tim suggested that categorical prohibitions would not be necessary if the broad standard of “not materially impairing conservation uses” is applied. Shelley, alluding to disc golf, said that use should consider impact on both people and wildlife. Walker averred that she is familiar with disc golf courses that are compatible with mountain biking, birding, and other forms of passive recreation, adding that contextual analysis is often key. Amy encouraged a case-by-case evaluation, rather than outright banning of an activity. Linda suggested that one useful distinction might be pre-existing use.

Review Board Membership

Amy announced that all current members but John Triana are up for reappointment and that numerous vacancies exist. Linda suggested that we should determine level of interest in any potential member before referring for appointment, adding that one way of gauging commitment would be attendance at more than one meeting previous to referral. Amy said that the next meeting’s agenda would include significant discussion time for appointment issues.

Review Board Glossary of Acronyms

Elanah has prepared a draft list of acronyms used in Review Board Minutes. Amy will send out a Google doc for comments/suggestions.

Review Board Member Updates

Tim on Highlands: Tim announced that, possibly by the end of this month, Fish and Wildlife will open up Highlands funding to entities smaller than states. He is hoping for one municipal applicant from Connecticut. Six Highlands projects have been closed this year by LAM. A Highlands celebration will occur at the end of July or beginning of August at Steep Rock in Washington (Connecticut).

Public Comment

No comment

Adjournment

On a motion by Joe G, seconded by Tim, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 11:59 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

Chat is appended.

Next meeting: Thursday, September 14, 2023, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM. (No meeting in August.)