

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom/teleconference)

July 14, 2022

## Minutes

**Board members present:** Tim Abbott, Karen Burnaska, Joe Gresko, Eric Hammerling (Co-Chair), Eric Lindquist, Amy Paterson (Co-Chair), Elanah Sherman, and Joe Welsh (all by Zoom except Elanah, who attended by phone)

**DEEP representatives:** Allyson Clarke, Property Agent; Carmen Colon, Executive Assistant to Commissioner Dykes; Andrew Hoskins, Chief of Staff

**Guests:** Aaron Lefland, Deputy Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) and Wendy Zimbardi, Board Member, Milford Land Conservation Trust

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Eric H called the meeting to order at 10:34 AM. Eric introduced newly appointed Review Board member Eric Lindquist from Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

### **Approval of May 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

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

### **DEEP Staff Updates**

Status of 2021 Annual Report (due February 15): Not addressed

Seasonal/Staff dedicated to updating 2016-2020 Green Plan:  
Andrew said that newly hired staff (see Other, below) will have a role in production of the Plan.

Other: Andrew announced that DEEP has hired two new staff members, increasing Land Acquisition personnel by 50%. The new hires are: Cameron Clegg (with a background in GIS, archeology, property management, and cultural issues) and Jamie Sidoriak (with DEEP experience on Green Plan, and as property agent and Land

and Water Resource Division staff). Jamie will take the DEEP lead on the UGCG program and will also assist with OSWA administration; in addition, she will continue doing some property management. Andrew said that the increase in personnel should result in more timely responses to inquiries. Andrew also gave a shout-out to the work of Land Acquisition staff members Allyson, Brian Florek, Lindsay Suhr, and Matt Starr for their efforts during a time of under-staffing. Amy asked Andrew if the Office director has been hired; Andrew responded that candidate review is in its final stage. Andrew announced that the State has received funding through the 2022 federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Estuarine and Land Conservation Program (CELCP) for coastal land acquisition. DEEP will be issuing a letter highlighting the new opportunities created by the grant and seeking input.

### **Old Business**

OSWA/UGCG working group: proposed technical corrections to C.G.S. Sec. 7-131d: Amy shared a screen of the statute and some recommendations. She said that the group's recommendations encompass technical corrections, administrative alterations, and changes that will require legislative action. She believes that the first step is to tackle the technical issues, among them the possible violation of putting federal easement before State easement when federal and State funding are combined (7-131[g][c]). Allyson added that easement problems outside of the federal context also need correction. Eric H said he hopes all technical corrections can be made this year. Amy promised to keep the Review Board informed of any meetings with the Attorney General's Office on technical corrections.

Joe G suggested that the Review Board submit all requests for changes (even requests of a more technical nature) directly to the legislature.

### **Other**

Issue related to Open Space 21% Goal: Joe G asked Andrew if municipal open space acquisitions that occur outside of OSWA and Highlands funding count toward the 21% open space conservation goal. Andrew conceded that such acquisitions are not adequately documented and/or applied to the percentage. Allyson said that submission of documentation regarding deeds and Resolutions are

required for such properties to be counted. Amy will send Joe the relevant statute that addresses this subject. Eric H said that the lack of a uniform definition among municipalities of open space contributes to the problem. Amy added that the absence of funding for a 21% registry, as implicitly required in Section 23-8, is another part of the problem.

CLCC informational session: CLCC is running an informational today on the UGCG program.

Call for climate change group volunteers: Eric H announced an open call for new climate change working group volunteers. The deadline for submitting interest (through a survey form on the GC3 site) is July 15.

### **Public Comment**

Aaron Lefland made brief comments. He joined CLCC as Deputy Director about two months ago.

### **Adjournment**

With a motion by Amy, seconded by Tim, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 11:16 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

**Next meeting: The date of the next meeting was not announced.**