

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

Meeting (via Zoom/teleconference)

July 8, 2021

Minutes

**Board members present:** Karen Burnaska, Linda Francois, Rep. Joe Gresko, Eric Hammerling (Co-Chair), Amy Paterson (Co-Chair), John Triana, (All by Zoom, except for Elanah, who attended by phone.)

**DEEP representatives:** Allyson Clarke, Nicole Lugli

**Guest:** Michael Lloyd

**Welcome and Introductions:** The meeting began at 10:30 AM.

Minutes were approved for the May 13<sup>th</sup> regular meeting and May 19<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting without amendment.

DEEP staff noted that they are making some changes to the scoring sheet for OSWA based upon input from the May 19<sup>th</sup> special meeting. In particular, work was being done to help ensure OSWA grants are as equitably distributed as possible. Rep. Gresko noted an article in the Norwich Bulletin pitting open space protection against affordable housing that review board members should familiarize themselves with.

Nicole gave an update on the STEPS stakeholder process to advise DEEP on solar siting/permitting, and announced an upcoming meeting on July 19<sup>th</sup> and a public comment period on the scoping document that was extended to July 26<sup>th</sup>.

Some discussion of the Green Plan and the need for seasonal support in the DEEP Land Acquisition and Management Office to make progress with the Green Plan update. Eric and Amy offered to write a letter on behalf of the Review Board to DEEP Commissioner Dykes requesting this support. Eric and Amy also noted that the Green Plan production and how the Review Board could assist the process would be the primary subject of discussion at the August Review Board meeting.

Amy provided an update on HB 6441 including the unfortunate late removal of the municipal option conveyance fee proposal that could have generated as much as \$75 million/year if all municipalities utilized it. Amy also gave an update on the status of the RCPP grant from NRCS that CLCC will be administering which would hopefully complement funding to OSWA grants.

Tim gave an update on the Highlands Act reauthorization and some 18 Highlands Projects that are currently in the works. There has been encouraging movement

with federal authorization and appropriations, but it is still unknown how additional resources will be matched at the state level and whether other technical issues with joint federal/state easements will persist.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 12:02 PM

Draft Minutes submitted by Eric Hammerling and Amy Paterson on behalf of Elanah Sherman, Secretary