

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom/teleconference)

August 19, 2021

Minutes

**Board members present:** Eric Hammerling (Co-Chair), Amy Paterson (Co-Chair), Elanah Sherman, John Triana,, Joe Welsh (all by Zoom except Elanah, who attended by phone)

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

**Guests:** Sylvie Boucher, (Sandy Breslin Land Conservation Fellow, Connecticut Land Conservation Council), Paul Elconin (Director of Land Conservation, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy)

**Welcome and Introductions**

Eric called the meeting to order at 10:38 AM.

**Approval of Minutes of the July 9, 2021 Meeting of the Review Board**

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

**DEEP Staff Updates**

Applications - Nicole reported that DEEP is receiving applications for the current round. In answer to a question from Amy, Nicole said that the scoring sheet should be finished by the end of the month.

August workshops - Nicole said about 50 registrants attended last week's application workshop. Attendees seemed pleased with the format and asked lots of questions. Nicole said the newly created parallels between the scoring sheet and the body of the application benefitted the discussion. Nicole also reported that the land trust workshop, held earlier in the month, was successful, with active participation by attendees. Amy said that funding, especially in regard to the cap and percentages, were a chronic issue at both events. Paul added that the limitation on number of applications per applicant and the geographic distribution requirements were other subjects of concern. Paul also expressed appreciation to DEEP staff for answering all questions posed by attendees. Eric reported that feedback indicates lingering confusion regarding Connecticut's Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) and its applicability to land conservation. He suggested that it might be helpful to show how TCI can directly support ongoing land conservation efforts by land trusts.

## **Business**

### Preparation of Connecticut's 2021-2025 Green Plan:

#### Letter to Commissioner Requesting Seasonal Staff Support –

John suggested that the letter to the Commissioner adopt a stronger tone that reflects the broader urgency of staff shortages at DEEP. Nicole responded that the Commissioner is presently trying to justify positions on federal funding and property management; she added that both these positions could potentially incorporate Green Plan responsibilities. Paul asked if DEEP could contract with a private nonprofit if staff is not available. Amy agreed that the Review Board should act as a strong advocate for more sufficient DEEP staffing, but added that the letter was intended only to address the immediate goal of Green Plan support. She did, however, agree to “tinker” with the language so that the letter acknowledges the more wide-ranging issue of DEEP staff shortages. The letter will go out directly after Amy makes revisions.

#### Green Plan Revision Process –

Eric suggested that the Board do a methodical section-by-section review of the last Green Plan, including follow-up on what goals were actually achieved and what issues were missing.

### Revisions to OSWA and UGCG Programs

Amy suggested a careful “down in the weeds” approach that seeks to remove ambiguities and avoid bottlenecks. She added that the information gleaned from DEEP’s public comment solicitation provides a good foundation for analysis. Amy also suggested forming a small committee dedicated to developing OSWA and UGCG recommendations. Elanah volunteered for the committee. Eric advised that this committee consult heavily with the Board’s legislative representative, Joe Gresko.

## **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

## **Adjournment**

On a motion by Zoom, seconded by Zoom, the meeting adjourned at 11:27 AM. (In other words, the connection was lost at 11:27.)

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

**Next meeting: Thursday, September 9, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM**