

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

Regular Meeting (via Zoom/teleconference)

August 11, 2022

Minutes

Board members present: Karen Burnaska, Eric Hammerling (Co-Chair), Walker Holmes, Eric Lindquist, Amy Paterson (Co-Chair), Elanah Sherman, John Triana, and Joe Welsh (all by Zoom except Elanah, who attended by phone)

DEEP representatives: Allyson Clarke, Property Agent; Andrew Hoskins, Chief of Staff; Jamie Sydoriak, Environmental Analyst, LAM; Cameron Clegg, Environmental Analyst, LAM

Guests: Yaw Darko, Project Specialist, Connecticut Land Conservation Council; Catherine Rawson, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy

Welcome and Introductions

Eric H called the meeting to order at approximately 10:31 AM.

Approval of July 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

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

DEEP Staff Updates

Status of 2021 Annual Report (due February 15, 2022): Andrew reported that a draft should be ready (internally) by early next week.

Updating 2016-2020 Green Plan: Andrew said that Jamie and Cameron are developing a work plan. DEEP will report back to the Review Board at the next meeting.

Coastal Land Acquisition Funding: Andrew announced that DEEP has organized a small informal group that will be formalized in the near future; he is presently the point person. He added that, although the State is the recipient of the grant, the funding includes opportunities for partnerships. In response to a question from Elanah, he said that grants will go beyond acquisition to include improvements, etc. Amy requested that DEEP provide information

that would enable CLCC to create a simplified document for land trusts. Amy and Eric H encouraged Review Board members to submit questions about the funding to them (for funneling to Andrew).

Old Business

OSWA/UGCG working group - proposed technical corrections to C.G.S. Sec. 7-131d:

Linda Francois and Amy have been working with Allyson to create new language that will correct the federal/state easement issue in 7-131d(c)(3). Alternative language has been sent to the Attorney General's Office. Amy emphasized that this obstacle must be cleared as soon as possible for the sake of OSWA applicants. Andrew responded that concepts for proposed legislative changes must be submitted to him by a week from today.

New Business

OSWA Funding Update: Release of \$10 Million Dollar OSWA Bonding (7/30 Bond Commission Meeting)

Communications and Expectations Re New Funding:

Andrew said the hope at DEEP is that projects will be funded at the highest percentage possible. Amy commented that outreach to prospective applicants should commence immediately. Issues in outreach efforts to be addressed include: availability of additional funding; limiting factors experienced by applicants; and importance of securing appraisal services as soon as possible. In addition to land trusts, the municipalities and water companies should be included in outreach. Elanah suggested that CLCC approach the members of the diversity panel at the last CLCC conference to solicit their ideas. Joe W said his membership group (American Water Works Association, Connecticut Section – Source Water Protection Committee) promotes grant opportunities and that a guest speaker would be helpful.

Walker suggested that, in view of the several complications and challenges faced by applicants, an application grace period may be warranted. Allyson countered that, the agency having twice before in previous years extended the deadline in response to scoring sheet delays and Covid complications, the current task is to communicate the urgency of timeliness. Andrew encouraged CLCC to direct questions from land trusts to him; he will keep a log of such communications.

Other

Elanah mentioned that a July 30 article in The Courant about the increase in OSWA funding was very misleading in its implications regarding how the program works, especially in regard to disability-related accessibility. Eric H asked Elanah to contact the reporter and suggest a follow-up article.

Public Comment: None**Adjournment**

With a motion by Karen seconded by Amy, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 11:28 am.

Respectfully submitted, Elanah Sherman, Secretary

Next meeting: Thursday, September 8, 2022, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm