

**TOWN OF HADDAM
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
FORMER HADDAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM
272 SAYBROOK ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
THURSDAY, 13 JANUARY 2022
APPROVED MINUTES
*Approved as Submitted at the 10 February 2022 Meeting***

ATTENDANCE

X	Peter Baird
X	Jessica Condil
X	Sue DeCarli
X	Tim McCane
X	Ed Schwing, Chairman
X	Tim Teran
A	Dante Ursini
X	Bill Warner, AICP Town Planner
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

GUEST SPEAKERS: Lisa Malloy, Director, Haddam Historical Society, and Steve Gephard, DEEP Supervising Fisheries Biologist.

Mr. Schwing, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and introduced guest speakers: Mr. Gephard and Mrs. Malloy.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Tim Teran motioned to approve the 2 December 2021 site walk minutes as submitted. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Sue DeCarli motioned to approve the 8 December 2021 minutes as submitted. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Tim Teran motioned to approve the 18 November 2021 minutes as submitted. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Budget Update

Mr. Warner stated he will provide the Committee with the Board of Selectmen (BOS) schedule when they plan to discuss the Higganum Cove budget requests. Mr. Warner reported in the general fund operating budget he increased the line item from \$7,000 to \$10,000 and for the Capital budget requested the \$100,000 be moved from the Capital Plan into the Capital budget making the funds available in July 2022. Mr. Warner noted BOS did seem supportive. Mr. Warner suggested members of the Committee attend the BOS meeting to explain the importance of the funding.

Mr. Warner stated there's an RFP out and a landscape architect will provide a comprehensive plan for the Cove. Mr. Teran and Mr. Baird, also Board of Finance (BOF) members, stated they did not believe the BOF would have an issue with this endeavor.

3. Future Uses at the Cove and Developing a Vision. Landscape Architect RFP

Future Uses: Mr. Schwing stated the two-page RFP was general enough to provide some flexibility of what the Committee would like to do. Mr. Warner stated the competitive process has been satisfied and four have expressed interest and will make presentations. Mr. Warner stated he had contact UCONN School of Landscape Architecture who has also expressed interest.

Mr. Gephard asked what the RFP was for. Mr. Warner stated park development landscape architecture (minor stuff nothing huge) and noted that there is only two acres of land.

Vision: Mr. Schwing stated the Committee had initially planned to review the vision statement at their 8 December 2021 meeting; however, Committee members attended the EDC meeting to listen to Mr. Warner's presentation on the Community Challenge Grant. Mr. Schwing presented the draft vision.

Mr. Teran had several comments: 1) Second paragraph - is Higganum Creek really Higganum River. Mrs. DeCarli stated Higganum River is referenced in her property deed. Mr. Gephard explained the tools professionals use to determine the name of waterways. A brief discussion followed as to how the creek or river was named. 2) Historical/Environmental Education – first sentence - typo – change “special place of” to “special place from”. Questioned whether it should be exclusive to students. Believes it should be opened to all. Possible wording – “For education purposes to foster nature and historical studies.” 3) On-Going Management of the Cove - Promoting events and attract people to the Cove. Discussion followed in regard to whether or not the Committee would want to take on the responsibility to oversee the scheduling of events, etc. Questioned what the Committee's responsibilities.

MOTION: Sue DeCarli motioned to amend the Vision Statement as discussed. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Higganum Center Grant

Mr. Warner reported he submitted the grant application today and he had met with State Representative Christine Palm about funding and getting her support of the grant. Mr. Warner reported the BOF approved the \$600,000 matching grant funds last night. Mr. Baird asked for a reminder of what the grant is for. Mr. Warner gave a brief synopsis. Discussion followed in regard to COVID relief funds and the need for town meetings before anything can move forward.

5. Guest Speakers: Lisa Malloy and Steve Gephard

Mr. Schwing asked the Committee and staff introduced themselves to Mrs. Malloy and Mr. Gephard.

Mr. Gephard stated he's a lifelong summer resident of Haddam (Camp Bethel) and as a supervising fish biologist for the State of Connecticut he has a lot of familiarity of the site both personally and professionally. When the EPA superfund project was underway the bureau chief appointed him as a point person and he worked on site for a while. Mr. Gephard complimented the Committee's statement noting it was along the lines of what they (EPA and DEEP) were thinking.

Mr. Gephard stated if the Committee was responsible for cutting all the brush in the upper mill race, he was very pleased. Mr. Gephard also stated to expose all of the historic artifacts is wonderful.

Mr. Gephard distributed and reviewed a handout, Higganum Cove Re-Development Thoughts – Fish, Wildlife, Recreation and Public Education Issues, January 2022, (copy on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and Land Use Dept.) with the Committee. Fish are the primary focus - herring, alewives, and blueback herring and the number that will come up to the falls will depend on how the fish are running in the Connecticut River. These are a very watchable fish and come in by the dozen and the waterfall helps to concentrate them in the area. Discussed sea lamprey (native to Connecticut and are

important to the eco-system) nested at the base of the falls; the American eel can get over the waterfall (show up in early June); and miscellaneous species - white suckers, minnows, trout. Mr. Gephard noted that although these species are not super unique to Connecticut River tributaries, what is unique is a small area with clear water (the same with the Salmon River).

Mr. Gephard stated the area is not just about fish, but also freshwater mussels and various bird species – eagle, black crowned night heron, egrets, herons, and osprey. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Gephard stated in his opinion this fall is very impressive and most people do not know about it. Would like to see a decking over the foundation with safety considerations that would allow people to view the waterfall and look down into the water to watch the fish runs. Noted this could also be ADA compliant. This would require engineering and funding and believes it can be accomplished without damaging the historic resources. Mr. Baird stated the Committee had discussed viewing windows.

Mr. Gephard moved his discussion to viewing windows. Mr. Gephard talked about the arch near the turbine (appears to be quite strong), the possibility to clean up the pit, block off the water (window), leave the turbine and other historic aspects, and construct stairs that come down into the area. Mr. Gephard suggested the installation of a thick viewing window into the arch as this would be an area where the fish would be spawning. Noted that there must be respectful consideration given to the historical artifacts and consideration would need to be given to rain/snow accumulation (installation of pump) and potential vandalism. Mr. Gephard stated there is nothing like this in New England. The Committee felt it was a valuable idea.

Mr. Teran asked if fish and/or mussels would be visible all year. Mr. Gephard stated the fish are visible mostly March through early July and then they most move on. Mussels burrow down in the mud and disappear in the winter. Mr. Gephard stated a platform over the viewing area would be valuable as it would provide a roof for the viewing area below. Also suggested locking the viewing area and have designated days for it to be open. Mr. Gephard spoke about the design and the operation and management of the project.

Discussed other potential opportunities on the site: A trail with steps on the south side. Encourage angling. Kayaking. The lower cove would be a great candidate for a boardwalk (viable even during a modest flood; flood season a great teaching time; allows people to be educated about the wetlands). Osprey nesting platform. Blue bird and Martin houses. Wood duck boxes. Opportunity to teach the public of what transpired on the site and the surrounding area (good quality panels with photos and information).

Mr. Schwing stated a number of Mr. Gephard's thoughts are similar to those of the Committee. Discussion followed in regard to boardwalks; birds that are currently visible on the site; involving industrial arts classes to build bird houses and duck boxes and biology or ecology classes to clean out/monitor the houses and boxes; and manning of a volunteer force.

Mr. Warner asked Mr. Gephard if he had noticed that the Higganum River is silting up and the main flow is cutting through the Cove. Mr. Gephard stated yes, in the area of the big rock. Mr. Gephard stated he would like to see all the water remain in one channel in order for the force of the water to keep it clear. Mr. Gephard also stated if the channel widens, it will limit public access.

Mr. Warner spoke in regard to a kayak launch at the base of the lowest concrete foundation. Mr. Gephard stated it would be convenient, but at the cost of the main channel. In terms of the management of the water, careful consideration needs to be taken. Mr. Gephard stated being aware of what the EPA left (he believes a clean piece of property) is an important factor in the process. If there is still some contaminate remaining, we do not want to inadvertently unearth it. Mr. Schwing stated he has some documentation and believes the EPA did not cleanup the site for residential.

Mr. Schwing asked if the State had anything that may help with signage. Mr. Gephard stated the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) have a link to the Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant which offer grants (water quality, habitat, and public awareness) and they fund a lot of signage. A well-crafted application (must be linked to Long Island Sound) may help garner funds for the boardwalk and the viewing platform and window (watchable wildlife). Noted that DEEP has no funding for signage.

Mrs. Malloy stated the Historical Society is currently working on getting the Dublin Hill and the entire Cove area listed on the State Register for Historic Places. Once this area is listed, it will allow the town to apply for grants for interpretive signage. Mr. Baird asked if Higganum Center is included. Mrs. Malloy stated no, but the Center will be next. The application for Dublin Hill/Higganum Cove will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review in February or March and the area should be designated in the spring.

Mrs. Malloy stated any interpretive signage needs to focus on the industries that were there from the 1600s up through the 1980s as well as the geological history of the area. Mrs. Malloy also stated historically the watercourse was known as Higganum River, but currently is known as Higganum Creek (will need to work this one out). Mrs. Malloy reviewed the types of mills on site: grist mill and saw mill 1670 – 1700s primarily up by the entrance. Mrs. DeCarli stated she believes the state historian should view the site as she believes the oldest mill may be where the proposed steps are being contemplated. Mr. McCane suggested the state archaeologist be contact has there should already be some documentation on the site. Mrs. Malloy stated hopefully the consultant that was hired in regard to Register of Historic Places has done her due diligence and will know the location of the mills.

Mrs. Malloy stated a map from the 1880s shows mills that you wouldn't traditionally think would be on the site such as an oakum mill that was very productive, a clothier's mill owned by the Reed family, a cotton mill in the 1850s, etc. All the mills need to be included as well as the stories of the people who owned them and the people who worked in them.

Mrs. Malloy stated other areas that should be included are: the Cove Wharf and the train. Mrs. DeCarli stated the Cove Wharf is a gray area. A brief discussion followed in regard to the placement of an historical panel as there was substantial dock usage by Scovil Hoe & Co. as well as the train (trestle right there). Mr. Teran stated the movement of goods and services is important and should be incorporated. Mr. Warner asked about the Ghost Train (aka the White Train). Mr. Gephard stated it's his understanding that it used the Air Line Trail.

Mrs. Malloy stated it's very important to protect the historic resources (the foundations, the one physical remnant remaining of the industrial history of the site). Important to maintain them, keep them visible, and talk about what they were there for. Have a good collection of photographs, maps, and drawings to be used on interpretive signage and a lot of research has and is currently taking place.

Mr. Baird asked Mrs. Malloy if she knew where the first mill was located. Mrs. Malloy stated she did not know, but her best guess would be at the upper portion of the river; and in order to make a 100 percent determination would require hiring an archaeologist to do a full dig. A brief discussion followed with it being noted that this is not an inexpensive process.

In response to Mrs. Malloy's presentation, Mr. Gephard stated any reuse of the foundations for fish viewing would need to be respectful of the historical resources and ultimately help preserve the history of the site. Mrs. Malloy stated she sees the fish viewing as a great adaptive reuse for the foundations and doesn't see a problem with that. Mr. Schwing stated the idea over the years has been to retain the historical aspect of the site as well as opening it up to the people. Mr. Schwing also stated the Committee has been trying to balance that.

Mr. Warner asked Mrs. Malloy about her thoughts regarding Native Americans. Mrs. Malloy stated there is no primary documentation about Native Americans using the site. Mr. Gephard stated given the industrial use it would be very difficult to find anything; however, knowing what we know about Native American utilization of fishery resources, he couldn't image Native American's not being on the site.

Mr. Gephard stated there are a lot of people who do not understand hydro-mechanical power and that would be a good historical panel. A brief discussion followed. Mr. Baird spoke in regard to marketing the "glacial" potholes (noted that they are not glacial pot holes).

Mr. Schwing thanked Mrs. Malloy and Mr. Gephard for taking their time to speak to the Committee.

6. Adjournment

MOTION: Tim Teran motion to adjourn. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Warner adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bunny Hall Batzner
Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 10 February 2022, 6:00 p.m.