

**TOWN OF HADDAM
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
THURSDAY, 10 MARCH 2022
APPROVED MINUTES
*Approved as Submitted at the 20 April 2022 Special Meeting***

ATTENDANCE

X	Peter Baird
X	Jessica Condil
X	Sue DeCarli
X	Tim McCane
X	Ed Schwing, Chairman
X	Tim Teran (6:18 p.m.)
X	Dante Ursini
X	Kate Anderson, Selectwoman and EDC Chairman
X	Bill Warner, AICP, Town Planner
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

Mr. Schwing, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Dan Ursini motioned to approve the 10 February 2022 minutes as submitted. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Interviews with Consultants:

Kent + Frost – 6:10 p.m. to 6:55 p.m.

Brian Kent, PLA, Principal, was present.

After introductions were made, Mr. Kent began his presentation by explaining his research prior to the submission of his proposal and the meeting – history of the town, the river, and the Cove; review of articles and reports pertaining to the Cove; the EPA's vegetation plan (not done to create a park); and visiting the site. Mr. Kent talked about the Cove's assets – the waterfall (focal point) and the remnants of the foundation ruins; the Committee's desire to connect the Cove to the village center (combination of commerce and recreation); and the placement of a sidewalk/pathway/boardwalk in the area of the guide rails not only for access, but for viewing of the waterway. Discussion followed regarding parking (level area and delineate spaces); replacing the existing gate with bollards (more user friendly); the installation of a sign (have one built by Mr. McCane); having a designated walking area(s) through a wildflower meadow; giving people the opportunity to get close to the water, but in a controlled manner; the potential reuse of vegetation from the area to be worked into the construction of a shelter/pavilion. Mr. Kent spoke in regard to the wetland area providing a meaningful experience for the user – floating platform, ADA fishing platform, kayak launch. Mr. Ken noted the Committee needs to be cognizant of the ongoing monitoring for contaminants and the need to work around it. In terms of Nosal Road, Mr. Ken suggested making it a more durable surface for walking and ADA accessible and by doing some strategic pruning along the way will assist with the views. Noted there are a variety of tree species (interesting forest mix). Briefly discussed working with the Valley Railroad.

Mr. Baird asked Mr. Kent his thought regarding signage throughout the Cove. Mr. Kent stated in his experience you want to teach as much as possible without printing it on a board noting that the reality is most people do not stop to read interpretative signs. Mr. Kent stated you want to design so most things

are self-evident, but still need to be very strategic about putting in relevant information. Mr. Kent also stated panels are vulnerable and if someone wants to do some damage that's what they will go for.

Mr. Kent stated the reason why the waterfall runs so well during the summertime is due to a large watershed (three streams that collect into it). Mr. Baird spoke in regard to the birds and fish. Mr. Teran asked if there's a way to combine basic signage and a video that can be accessed. Mr. Kent stated that type of media is becoming more available as technology improves.

Mr. Teran asked maintenance questions about the wildflower field. Mr. Kent stated the establishment period is critical; and if the area is dry, the need for watering to make sure the plants get a healthy head start. Afterwards, it should be on its own and it should only be mowed once a year. Mr. Kent stated he left the stalks of his wildflowers as the birds like the seed heads.

Mr. Baird spoke in regard to connecting Swan Hill and the Rossi properties with the scenic trail and then along the river.

Mr. Schwing asked if the work could be done over stages. Mr. Kent stated typically this type of project happens in stages and the Committee would want it to happen in stages. The best pathway is to build on the successes – start out modestly, get feedback from the community, and move forward from there. Mr. Kent stated he would submit an overall plan that will be subdivided into phases in the proper order with budgets to the best of their ability.

Mr. Ursini asked how big his network of providers is in order to implement different options. Mr. Kent stated the town would need to acquire funding and then detailed constructions documents would need to be prepared in order to go out to bid. Mr. Kent spoke about vendors who specialize in specific areas of construction.

Mr. Warner stated the good thing about phases is the capital plan budget – easy to layout and digest. Mr. Kent stated he's not seen the amount of grant money that's available as there currently is and spoke in regard to various programs for funding. Mr. Kent stated having a plan will be very important and useful in applying for grant money.

Mr. Teran asked if Mr. Kent would oversee the work at the Cove. Mr. Kent stated his company could if that's what the Committee and/or the Town would like.

Ms. Anderson asked the time line to complete the master plan. Mr. Kent stated a lot depends on the client and the client's ability to get feedback noting that if the Committee should chose to meet twice a month rather than once, that would accelerate the process. Mr. Baird asked about community involvement. Mr. Kent stated he'd love the community's involvement.

Mr. Kent stated he does not leave handouts, but can forward the presentation to Mr. Warner to share with the Committee.

LADA – 7:05 p.m. to 7:50 p.m.

Jeff Jacobson, P.E., Nathan L. Jacobson & Associates, and Terri-Ann Hahn, Landscape Architect, LADA, were present.

After introductions were made, Ms. Hahn stated they were aware of the original remediation and then things got quite; but it's good to see attention has returned to the area. Ms. Hahn reported that she and Mr. Jacobson have worked together for 30 years and the Committee has received copies of their proposal explaining who they are and what they're projects are. Tonight they discussed those projects in relation to the Cove. Ms. Hahn stated they have spent time at the Cove over the last couple of months to understand what's going on and what's on site. Ms. Hahn stated the remediation plan has specific purposes – remediation, soil stabilization, open up the view, and expose some of the foundation; and now the Town

needs to think about how the area will be used. Ms. Hahn stated currently there are some steep slopes in odd spots and settling of materials. The Committee needs to think about how people will and are going to use the Cove, does the Committee want people in particular locations, and if not, how to prevent them from going to that location(s). Ms. Hahn made the following points: 1) Look at the Cove from a different starting point and see if it can be made better. 2) Graffiti on site (maintenance issues). 3) Existing plants made sense at the time of remediation; however, will they still make sense depending on the site's use. 4) Some invasive species are returning and those are a problem. Ms. Hahn asked the Committee what is the Cove become.

In regard to connecting the Cove to the Center, Ms. Hahn noted that the original Higganum Center Plan, which she and Mr. Jacobson helped with, was not recognized; and this plan had ideas of how to bring sidewalks in from the Center down Depot Road. It was pointed out that one area has steep slopes, banks, and limited right-of-way. Mr. Jacobson reviewed a project that took place in Woodbury that had similar terrain. Mr. Jacobson stated they have been involved in a number of other similar projects – Dinosaur State Park, Airline Trail – where a variety of different types of bridges (steel super structures, fiberglass pedestrian bridge in Salem) have been used. Mr. Teran asked Mr. Jacobson if he had partnerships with people who did this type of work. Mr. Jacobson stated yes.

Ms. Hahn stated the walkway would probably stay on the side of Depot Road where the stone does not jut out and once off the bridge, may have a boardwalk or an extensive walkway system (a bit more land and less steep) that continues on. Ms. Hahn showed a series of boardwalks.

Ms. Hahn stated the intersection of Nosal Road is interesting because of the new bridge (do not want to touch). Discussed setting the stop bar back a bit to allow for a clear sight distance.

Ms. Hahn stated parking at the moment is undefined which works okay until a large event is taking place and this would be another reason for wanting to connect the Cove to the Center. Discussion followed in regard to a potential turnaround and ADA compliance (parking and walking) and the Committee considering what they would like. Ms. Hahn spoke in regard to the slopes exceeding ADA compliance, but can be modified by terracing, ramps, and stair complexes and these options would be selected based on what the Committee is looking for at the Cove (a trail system, usable open space and gathering areas would have different approaches as to what can/should be done). Noted that Branford Manor has a stepped amphitheater.

Ms. Hahn pointed out dangerous conditions such as steep slopes and features that are in places that potentially can become attractive to people (does the Committee want them to go there). Ms. Hahn stated the last time she was on site, it was 30 degrees and she saw a child take a skateboard down to the stream (unclear what he was doing; and asked the Committee if this is something they want). Discussion followed in regard to where would the Committee like people to be able to go and not go; the site having been used for specific purposes and those remnants having pros and cons attached to them (interesting, historic, but create slopes and drops that could potentially be complicated); and the shoring up of embankments on the historic elements and epoxy injections to keep items in place (State Historic Preservation Office - SHPO - has helped with what can or cannot be done). Mr. Jacobson spoke in regard to the Millbrook Greenway, Coventry, where they had to work around a stonewall and slopes.

Ms. Hahn stated although there's a beautiful view at the Cove, there's a lack of things to do there. Ms. Hahn stated they're aware of the Committee's mission statement and wanting to install historical/informational markers. Ms. Hahn stated they have been working with Lisa Malloy, Director, Haddam Historical Society, to develop markers for the Haddam Center sidewalk project. Ms. Hahn stated once the Committee determines what they would like at the Cove such as a pavilion and/or areas where people can have something to do, she and Mr. Jacobson can assist in reaching that goal. Briefly reviewed small gathering areas – number of different choices – Marlborough Town Green, gathering area at Central Connecticut State University, and Veterans Memorial in Simsbury.

Ms. Hahn stated currently there is no access to the water and it was not a part of the original plan. She and Mr. Jacobson are aware the Committee is interested in a kayak area – how does the Committee imagine the area would be used.

Ms. Hahn stated there has been significant impact to the site due to time, weather, and water. Two photos shown of the site – right after the remediation and current (soil settled, rocks dislocated). Ms. Hahn noted that water is one of the most destructive elements and pointed out a sink hole. Ms. Hahn also pointed out a brick arch that's of particular interest.

Discussion followed in regard to possible solutions – walls, stabilizing the soils, better stormwater management, defining the historic features, what to retain, and what to show and why. Historic preservation – showed a photo of the Bushnell stone steps that will be reworked due to water damage.

Mr. Jacobson stated his office provides on call services to DEEP (mostly on state park projects) and noted their work at Gillette Castle – renovation of the main access drive which involved chip sealing and restoration of some of the adjacent walls; finished a major project with restoration of the walls along the perimeter of the Castle, the stairways going up, and some of the patio areas which required extensive collaboration with the SHPO.

Ms. Hahn stated the original plantings served some very specific purposes – soil stabilization and introduced native plants into the area. The use of the site will depend on the plantings – separate and define areas, invasive species management, and the use of plant material to keep people away from specific areas (Hop Meadow Country Club was used to demonstrate this).

Ms. Hahn spoke in regard to maintenance – time and cost – and how this will affect what takes place on the site (noted the broken concrete and truck tracks that are currently on site) and expansion use – what does the Committee want to do, how many people do you want to use the Cove, how long do you want them to stay, and where do you want them not to go.

Mr. Ursini asked if the foundation with the turbine close to the falls had been reviewed. Ms. Hahn stated yes, noting there is a lot of graffiti on site. Mr. Ursini asked if sites like this have surveillance video cameras or motion detection lights. Ms. Hahn stated most have lights, but cameras are easier to deal with now (just a question of where the information is going). Most sites are heavily used and that's not the case for the Cove at this time.

Mr. Baird stated the center piece of the Cove is the waterfall; and asked how they plan to use that. Ms. Hahn stated it depends on how the Committee would like to use the Cove. Ms. Hahn stated she does believe getting to the viewing area needs to be improved, noting it was difficult to reach the site.

Mr. Teran asked if a master plan with stages would be developed. Ms. Hahn stated yes. Mr. Teran asked what would be the first item that would be focused on. Ms. Hahn stated the kayak launch is considered low hanging fruit; however, making the site easier to walk would be the first thing she would address and getting to the falls (safe walkway while being able to see the historical features). Mr. Ursini talked about people who use the other side of the site (Depot Road) to get down to the waterfall and to fish (talked about the need to make the access safe). Mr. Warner stated it should be made safe.

Mr. Schwing asked how the process would work – brainstorming session. Ms. Hahn stated yes, look at the plans and see what's possible as well as costs (choice of Committee). Ms. Hahn noted the space is not overly large and would need to look at whether uses are compatible not only with each other but also the size of the site. Also discussed was holding a public input session. Ms. Hahn asked the Committee to contemplate the number of people they would like to see using the Cove – example: 100 people - need to consider parking, are they coming at one time or over a period of time. Mr. Schwing stated the Committee would like to have something structured and viewing/access to the falls. Ms. Hahn stated she didn't believe safe access could be achieved without tearing some things down and rebuilding. Ms. Hahn also stated a list of next steps would be generated.

Mrs. Condil asked about thoughts/recommendations for plantings. Ms. Hahn stated it would depend on the use. Mrs. Condil stated she's was thinking in the line of pollinators. Ms. Hahn stated there's a pollinator component that would be considered (can be a bit messy, and may want to put in a specific area).

Mr. Schwing asked if there would be meetings. Ms. Hahn stated yes, an initial meeting, follow up meeting, want Committee input (what works, what doesn't work, alternatives). Mr. Schwing asked if they had worked with sites similar to this in regard to ADA compliance. Ms. Hahn stated it's a challenge and to make it truly ADA compliant will need to take steps to work their way through the site. Noted that one section is at a 10 percent pitch will be the most challenging. Once down to the open area can work with it and see what makes sense. Mr. Warner stated the 2000 plan showed a parking down there. Mr. Warner stated this is important as you need to create a situation where the resident trooper can drive down there and sit to do reports. Mrs. Condil stated an ambulance may need to get down there. Ms. Hahn stated if large scale events are being contemplated, then there needs to be means to get down there. Noted that ADA is required (social obligation and if federal or state funds are accepted).

Mr. Schwing asked if there was a ratio of an appropriate number of people that should be on the site at one time. Ms. Hahn stated there are standard space requirements.

Ms. Hahn stated she and Mr. Jacobson are ready to start work when the Committee might need them.

A brief discussion followed in regard to survey work, whether existing surveys can be used, and the use of the new 2020 topographic maps may be useful.

3. Discussion/Deliberations

The Committee discussed the highlights of the two presentations and what they felt would best serve the town.

4. Potential Selection

MOTION: Jessica Condil motioned to accept the proposal from Kent + Frost as presented by Brian Kent, PLA, Principal. Tim McCane second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Warner reported he will set up the contract and let Mr. Kent know that when he's ready to address the Committee again a meeting will be scheduled. Mr. Warner noted funding will be available 1 July 2022 (new fiscal year).

5. Adjournment

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

Mr. Warner adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bunny Hall Batzner
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Recording Clerk

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 14 April 2022, 6:00 p.m.