

**TOWN OF HADDAM  
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
COMMUNITY CENTER  
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441  
WEDNESDAY, 20 APRIL 2022  
APPROVED MINUTES  
*Approved as Submitted at the 12 May 2022 Meeting***

**ATTENDANCE**

A	Peter Baird
A	Jessica Condil
X	Sue DeCarli
X	Tim McCane
X	Ed Schwing, Chairman
A	Tim Teran
X	Dante Ursini
X	Kate Anderson, Selectwoman and EDC Chairman (6:11 p.m.)
X	Bill Warner, AICP, Town Planner
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

Mr. Schwing, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**1. Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION:** Sue DeCarli motioned to approve the 10 March 2022 minutes as submitted. Dan Ursini second. Motion carried unanimously.

**2. Brainstorming Session with Consultant**

Brian Kent, PLA, Principal, Kent + Frost, was present.

Mr. Schwing reported that those Committee members who could not attend had sent emails with suggestions. Mr. Warner had copies for anyone who wanted to review them.

Mr. Kent stated he finds the project exciting and that he has spent a lot of time learning about the site as well as Higganum and the more he digs into it, the more interesting it gets.

Mr. Kent began his presentation with an aerial map showing Higganum Center to Higganum Cove and believes this is the heart of the community and what takes place in the Cove should complement the Center. Discussed getting from the Center to the Cove - best way would be to walk or ride a bike and the challenge is to make the journey appealing (comfortable, safe). Mr. Kent pointed out other resources within walking distance of the Center – Swan Hill (Haddam Land Trust, HLT), the New England Trail, and the Higganum Reservoir. Noted there is a small parking area, but once the Cove becomes a destination, there will be insufficient parking.

Mr. Ursini noted that the HLT is looking to make improvements and may be relocating the Swan Hill entrance off of Dublin Hill and putting their signage there as it's unclear what may happen with HES. Mr. Warner stated the HLT owns the property between HES and the Methodist Church along Saybrook Road (Route 154) and a trail could be easily made right to the field.

Using the map, Mr. Warner pointed out a fisherman's trail that runs along the brook that could potentially be used to gain access to Swan Hill as well as the Cove. Mr. Kent asked if there was some concern about HES not being accessible. Mr. Warner stated the town is looking for a future use and right now the

town is leaning toward community uses with possibly one section being used as a private school. Mr. Kent stated under any scenario there should be some connection to the trail from the HES property (if property sold, there could be a condition trail access is retained).

Mr. Kent noted that Mr. Baird felt these resources are attributes the town should capitalize on and currently there is no landmark promoting these natural resources. Showing a photo of the intersection of Saybrook Road (Route 154) and Killingworth Road (Route 81), Mr. Kent asked about the grassed area (some owned by DOT and some Village Parks Society); and stated this may be a spot for a landmark (DOT permission).

Mr. Warner stated at the corner of the Rossi property (Saybrook Road and Depot Road) there has been discussion about the creation of a small open space area and perhaps a sign could be placed there. Mr. Warner will provide Mr. Kent with a copy of the grant that the town applied for.

The next series of photos moved down Depot Road and discussion followed in regard to the area not making people feel very comfortable walking due to the narrowness of the road. Mr. Kent pointed out a stonewall located on the right side of the road, the town's right-of-way on that side of the road (could be advantageous), the drop off on the left side of the road after the Rossi property (HLT owned), and the new Dublin Hill Bridge. Discussion followed in regard to the safety for people walking and potentially pushing the guard rail as far to the edge of the slope as possible (questionable due to traffic engineering standards), the placement of fill, and the installation of a boardwalk. Mr. Warner reported that Jacobson & Associates had looked at the site previously and provided an estimate (very expensive).

Mr. Kent spoke in regard to the frontage of the Cove and the parking area. Some landscaping needed to the front and the installation of a park like sign (similar to the CT state parks' signs). Mr. Warner stated Mr. McCane has made a very nice cedar sign (photo to be provided to Mr. Kent). The parking area is very steep, needs to be graded, and designed into a more conventional parking area.

At this point of the presentation, Mr. Kent reviewed a matrix he had created from the Committee's input and the vision statement as to what the Committee might like to see on the site (some responses overlapping). Mr. Kent stated he will categorize/redistributed list and this will help to generate a budget.

Continuing through a series of photos and maps, Mr. Kent pointed out the upper channel (the area Mr. Warner suggested a walkable path). Mr. Warner spoke in regard to Wadsworth Falls, Middlefield – small parking area, short walk to the falls, sit in the grass; and that the Cove should be a bit more with educational. Briefly discussed finding the balance of not over populating the area.

Mr. Kent reviewed a map showing the upper channel and the location of the original grist mill; a photo (due to a crack in the slab, unclear of its stability); a second map (Beers 1874) showing the Gladwin-Reed Grist mill and Russell Manufacturing; and photos of the existing gate and a proposed more user friendly upgrade (removal of gate, small low standing stonewalls on either side of a single bollard with two access points and an informational sign).

Mr. Kent reported on 4 April 2022 he and his business partner, Chad Frost, met with Mr. Schwing and Mr. Warner to walk the site. The next series of photos are from that day. The first photo shows a steep embankment (guard rail needed) and where the pond once was; the split in the path (formerly Cove Wharf Road/now Nosal Road) with EPA fencing showing now it angles down. Also reviewed postcards showing the former mills and a 1914 Sanborn map of the site (Russell Manufacturing Co.). Mr. Kent pointed out what he believes was the original Russell building (noted on the map as Speeders Spinners) and pointed out the other areas of operation. Mr. Kent stated the Sanborn maps were created for insurance purposes (fire). Mr. Kent also reviewed an old photo of the site and pointed out an area of water (just before the building; believes the flume went out of it). The next two photos showed the turbine area with a sketch of how all the belts would be turned by the turbine and the upper portion of the turbine area. Mr. Kent stated there may be some way to put a structure on it. Photos of the Smilow Cancer Center Healing Garden, Waterford, and a pavilion at Coogan Farm Heritage Center, Mystic, were shown.

The next series of photos showed the flat grassy area where the mills sat (known as a good mill seat); the foundations (as they were during the EPA's cleanup) and what potentially those foundations could look like (Nature Center property, Mystic); options for landscaping to direct walking and prohibiting people from getting into areas; open frame construction to delineate a structure (the site of Benjamin Franklin's house, Philadelphia), recreating a mill site through interpretive signage, and using local artists to help create visuals such as the water tower (stained Plexiglas tower in New York City); utilize what is left techniques have potential; and the remnants of the foundations and what they were made of (various materials – granite, brownstone, brick, metal oil drums filled with concrete [not as compelling as the original stone foundations; 20<sup>th</sup> century masonry]).

Mr. Kent reviewed the photos of the flat concrete area voicing concern of undermining and a hole where water is running in and out (concern over structural integrity). Given its location it does have a future and usefulness, but the question is whether the concrete is suitable. Mr. Schwing stated he remembers from the 2000 study, photos depicting people going down to the water; and asked if it would be difficult to create a path. Two photos show what appears to be a path going down to the water. Mr. Warner noted the site has been mowed and there's solid ground going all the way to the water. Mrs. DeCarli stated there's a cellar with doorways and the pile of rocks were put there to prevent people from going in. Mr. Ursini questioned whether it was stabilized. Mrs. DeCarli stated she believes the hole is a stairway. Mr. Kent voiced additional concern. If this site is stable, it would be a good location for a pavilion or amphitheater. Mrs. DeCarli stated after the EPA clean, the concert for the grand opening was held in this area. Mr. Schwing agreed.

Using a drone photo, Mr. Kent pointed out the foundation, the power house location, and the newer buildings. Comparison photos of the Cove show its openness after the EPA cleanup and how it's changed as of today. The EPA restoration plan with plant list was shown (objective was to vegetate the area with native plants and stabilize it, it wasn't meant to recognize, preserve, or think about the historical significance of the site).

The next photo shows the stand alone concrete slab and looking at the creek. Mr. Kent pointed out the area that has been identified as a kayak put in area. Noted periodic maintenance required. Also pointed out a potential boardwalk location (drone photo shows road coming almost to the water's edge) and examples of boardwalks. Mr. Ursini asked if the boardwalk would be only to the water's edge or go into the water. Mr. Kent stated that would be a risk analysis as to how far you would want to go as the area is influenced by tidal elevation. Mr. Kent stated the area is more for bird watching and enjoying the scenery.

The next series of photos show the old Cove Wharf Road/Nosal Road, the trestle, and the river and potential options for the site: hard packed stone dust trail (Botanical Garden, Booth Bay, ME); masonry, ramp, or platform kayak put ins (Mr. Ursini stated in the area of the sycamore tree, there is sufficient room to have a put in.); and signage (Corten steel panels with cutouts, durable, vandal proof; rustic roof). Discussion followed in regard to obtaining a full survey of the property.

Mr. Kent stated the next series of photos shows the area where people swim. Mr. Kent asked the Committee if they had contemplated formalizing the area or just leaving it alone. Mr. Ursini stated this is the area he had proposed to place wood chips.

A series of topographical survey maps [Restoration As-Built (Overall Site) for Higganum Cove Site, #19 Nosal Road, Haddam, CT, prepared by Kratzert, Jones & Associates, Inc., Date: September 22, 2015, Sheets 1-3 and Restoration As-Built for Higganum Cove Site, #19 Nosal Road, Haddam, CT, prepared by Kratzert, Jones & Associates, Inc., Date: September 22, 2015, Sheet 1] were shown and reviewed. Mr. Kent noted that these maps are not A-2 surveys. A brief discussion followed in regard to a line on the map with the Legend indicating it was Limit of Wetland.

Mr. Kent stated people will want to view the waterfall, but trying to create a deck while keeping people safe could get very large and costly. Mr. Kent suggested framing it out with beams while leaving an opening in the center (cordoned off). Mr. Kent stated he didn't believe it would be a good idea to allow

people down into this particular area, but the area should be cleaned up. Discussion followed in regard to a clear walkover (Mr. Kent stated it's unnerving); having some sort of cover to prevent trash from being thrown into the space; educational programs conducted on the site; creating an area where people could step down into the foundation; the concrete slab area possible being a picnic area; the open area remaining a grassy space; natural landscaping; a boardwalk going out to a square platform; and kayak put in. Mr. Kent pointed out the location of the water tower and it being a focal point (perhaps a vertical element) and that the identity of the cotton mill should be retained (signage telling the story). Mr. Kent stated the contaminated soil was completely removed and replaced with clean fill and this area would be a passage way to the lower level.

In regard to the upper parking lot, Mr. Kent suggested a walkway/pathway, the installation of Mr. McCane's sign, and the removal of the gate and installing something more attractive. The next step would be to get the Committee's comments and ideas (within the next week) to Mr. Kent. Mr. Kent will provide a copy of tonight's presentation.

Mr. Warner distributed copies of Project Schedule (Exhibit A) and Scope of Services (Exhibit B) to the Committee. Mr. Warner briefly reviewed. Discussion followed as to whether the Committee should meet prior to meeting with Mr. Kent again and determined they would meet at their regular meeting on Thursday, 12 May 2022.

Discussion followed in regard to a plan merely being conceptual (at this point), the pavilion (placement), and trees (funding could be through donations; named in honor of someone),

Mr. Warner asked Mr. Kent what he could do with \$100,000. Mr. Kent stated he couldn't answer the question at this time as he doesn't believe he and the Committee have reached that point yet and the Committee needs to agree on a design. Mr. Kent also stated as part of his scope he's to supply a cost estimate/general budget and once that's available, what makes the most sense - improvements to the front entrance would be Phase 1 and with what's leftover where can it best be served.

Mr. Ursini stated he liked Mr. Kent's idea of grassing the area and stone dusting the trail to the river would be two big additions. A nice entry and signage would be plus. Mr. Warner asked Mr. Kent about the placement of millings. Mr. Kent stated the millings could be the base and then stone dust on top. Discussion followed in regard to the integrity of the road (strong base) and grading it. Mr. Schwing stated the town's representatives have not yet been spoken to and suggested Senator Norm Needleman and Representative Christine Palm be contacted. Mr. Warner stated Representative Palm has asked if the town needs anything. Mr. Ursini asked about the Rockfall Foundation and the Gateway Commission.

## **5. Adjournment**

**MOTION:** Dan Ursini motion to adjourn. Tim McCane second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Warner adjourned the meeting at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Bunny Hall Batzner*  
Bunny Hall Batzner  
Recording Clerk

**The next meeting is scheduled for 12 May 2022, 6:00 p.m.**