

**TOWN OF HADDAM
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
THURSDAY, 11 AUGUST 2022
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

X	Peter Baird
X	Jessica Condil (Left at 7:00 p.m.)
X	Sue DeCarli
X	Tim McCane
X	Ed Schwing, Chairman
A	Tim Teran
X	Dante Ursini (Arrived 6:01 p.m.)
X	Bill Warner, AICP, Town Planner
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

Guest: Alex Cummings

Mr. Schwing, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Peter Baird motioned to approve the 30 June 2022 minutes as submitted. Sue DeCarli second. Motion carried unanimously.

Correction to the 6 July 2022 minutes: page 1, Call to Order – change “p.m.” to “a.m.”

MOTION: Tim McCane motioned to approve the 6 July 2022 minutes as amended. Dan Ursini second. Motion carried unanimously.

Prior to the approval of the 6 July 2022 minutes, Mr. Baird stated he enjoyed the day and that he learned a lot. Those who were in attendance that day agreed and stated they appreciated Mr. Wintsch taking the time to speak/educate them. Mrs. DeCarli stated Mr. Wintsch is a great guy and very interesting.

Prior to moving into the next agenda item, Mr. Schwing asked Mr. Warner if the Board of Selectmen (BOS) would need to approve the landscaping plan. Mr. Warner stated it probably should be presented to the BOS and they will have to approve when the Committee starts spending of money.

Mr. Schwing stated there was a quick discussion at the 6 July 2022 regarding how the Committee would preserve the Cove. Mr. Schwing stated after the meeting, it was suggested after the meeting that there's a statute that the BOS or town meeting could vote to make the Cove an official public park preventing it from returning to private hands. Mr. Schwing also stated the Cove currently belongs to the town; however, the next administration may decide to sell the parcel. Mr. Schwing asked who the town's attorney is. Mr. Warner stated there are no restrictions on the parcel and that DEEP may fight the proposal, but that's a bridge to cross later. Mr. Warner stated the purpose of having the Haddam Land Trust (HLT) take the site over was to make sure it didn't return to private hands, but the transfer to HLT never came to be. Mr. Warner stated the town's attorney Rich Carella would need to draft some language, probably deed restrictions, and it would have to go to a town meeting.

Mr. Cummings, an abutting property owner to the Cove, asked if the Cove would be protected from further development if it became a public park. Mr. Schwing stated yes. Mr. Cummings asked if the same would apply if it became a state park. Mr. Warner and Mr. Schwing stated they would have no control over a state park. Mr. Schwing stated the Cove was taken by eminent domain and it was transferred to the town without any clauses/restrictions. Mr. Warner stated because of the Town of Haddam and the land swap, the legislature changed the laws which makes it almost impossible for the state to develop a park or to transfer it. Mr. Schwing stated for the town it's still possible.

2. Discussion on Future Cove Expenditures

Mr. Schwing stated the town received some very good news that through the town's representatives it has received two grants. Mr. Warner stated the Committee has \$100,000 from the town, \$280,000 from the state, and an additional \$20,000 for a total of \$400,000. Mr. Warner reported that DEEP will be administering the grant, all the paperwork has been completed, and DEEP's attorneys are putting together the contract agreement. Mr. Warner stated he was successful with the DEEP staff who agreed to reference the master plan allowing the Committee to cherry pick from the plan once the master plan has been provided to them. Mr. Ursini noted another huge benefit in having a master plan done.

Mr. Warner stated the question lies as to what the Committee should do with the \$400,000. Mr. Warner stated he took the plan and tried to identify the areas of priority. Mr. Warner reviewed the items and costs associated to them:

Upper Area of Cove (page 1): Gravel parking lot (1) - \$11,250 – grading the hump out of area and installing stone and creating a real parking lot. Mr. Baird asked if Public Works could assist with this. Mr. Warner stated yes, but it would be hard to get them. **Main entryway – Sign and Bollards (2)** – Have a new main entry sign – no cost. Bollards – \$1,000 each - remove the existing gate and install a couple of bollards (potentially with solar lights on top) – these would be removable (locking mechanism) to allow maintenance or emergency vehicle access. **Natural Surface Upper Trail (3)** - \$4,000 – Mr. Hunter has already done a lot of the grading, has made a big difference in what he's taken out already, definitely could put some more money into some steps and surfacing in various areas so it doesn't wash out on certain slopes. Mr. Hunter's price was \$2,200. **Planting Upper Wildflower Area (4)** - \$4,500 – Mr. Baird sent out the Rockfall Foundation grant. The pollinator garden will be a perfect submission for the grant. Will apply for grant. Mr. Schwing stated he had contacted the Garden Club, but has not yet received a return call. This should be something they could handle. **Main Path with Guide Rail and Stone Dust (5)** - \$28,688 – The price Mr. Kent provided is based on unit cost and would cover about 1,200 feet (approximately down to the former McCane parcel). Refurbish the path and create a better surface heading down towards the river. Mr. Ursini noted that the Committee approved at the last meeting Mr. Hunter's proposal (less expensive).

Mr. Cummings asked who would maintain the site noting that there are already a number of dirt bike riders going on the site. Mr. Warner stated the town. Mr. Cummings asked if the town is responsible for cleaning up after the public comes in and destroys the site. Mr. Warner stated yes, as its town property. Mr. Ursini stated it would be enforced by the state police. Mrs. Condil asked if the site would be open to everyone and not just town residents. Mr. Warner stated it's currently opened to everyone and if state money is put into the site, it would be difficult to restrict the site. Mrs. Condil voiced concern over activity that's presently taking place at the site. Mr. Cummings stated he's had items stolen from his property, there's a lot of loud activity taking place on site, and it's usually underage people. Mr. Cummings mentioned Wadsworth Falls (closed), Seven Falls (closed, state park), and since the State has opened their parks to all states, incidents have increased. Mr. Cummings stated there are a number of items on the plan that he agrees with; however, it's an invitation for disaster (volume of people, cost/time to keep site clean). Mr. Warner stated Wadsworth isn't closed, but a permit system for out-of-state people was implemented and DEEP patrols the site.

Mr. Ursini noted the Committee has put a lot of thought into those concerns.

Mr. Cummings asked the benefits of making the Cove public v. town. Mr. Warner again stated its town property. Mr. Warner stated the town would be hard pressed if someone fought it; and asked how it would be patrolled (who's going to check licenses). Mrs. DeCarli stated someone would have to be paid to monitor those coming onto the site similar to Chester and Deep River. Mr. Schwing noted the water access, which attracts people, is on the opposite side (Depot Road); whereas, the Cove side would be different. Mr. Cummings stated it's all over right down to the beach at the river. Mrs. DeCarli noted the town does not own the beach.

Mrs. Condil stated she had received a report that out-of-towners had been throwing beer bottles at kids and a resident was hit over the head with a bottle. Mr. McCane talked about the garbage left behind. Discussion followed with it being noted that volunteers picked the garbage up. Mr. Schwing noted things were worse when the tower was still on the site. Mr. McCane disagreed. Mr. Ursini stated the Committee has talked about this matter and yes, there are concerns, but enforcement would be the key. Mr. Warner stated the theory is if the area is improved and it's a location where responsible people go, the irresponsible people will not go to the site. Mr. Warner noted some of these issues did not exist during the spring. Mr. Cummings stated if the site's improved, it will make it more inviting to people. Discussion followed at length.

Mr. McCane stated the town already has a significant amount of acreage in state forest and this 12 acre site should be exclusively for town residents. Mrs. Condil agreed. Mr. McCane stated if taking money from the state opens the site up to non-residents, then perhaps the Committee should reconsider. Discussion followed in regard to drug paraphilia be left behind (at the yellow gate, on the picnic table, and at the beach) and an individual passed out on one of the benches. Mrs. DeCarli stated the partying is not new; however, it has calmed down since the clearing has been taking place.

Mr. Schwing called for order as there were too many conversations taking place at once.

Continuing with the plan, Mr. Warner as the Committee if they wanted to do something with the parking lot or leave it as is. Mr. Ursini asked if the broken up pavement after the parking lot would remain or be removed. Mr. Warner stated the pavement would be ground up and remain on site. Mr. Cummings questioned the parking area not being able to accommodate some of the proposals.

Lower Area of Cove (page 2): Turbine Viewing Platform & Safety Railings (7) – \$336,500.00. Mr. Schwing asked if some of the existing money could “seed” this project (an engineering study outlining specific requirements) and then raise money somewhere else to build it. Mr. Warner stated funds cannot be put aside. A decision needs to be made as to whether the Committee wants to have this built or not. Mr. Cummings asked questions about the turbine, but voiced concern that by blocking this area off there will be more people on the opposite side of the street. Discussion followed about the use of the new path to reach the falls; reducing the risk of falling by blocking off the arch access from below the turbine; and reduction of the graffiti. **Mill History/Activity Area (8)** – Area after the turbine area. It was proposed the area be graded down and leveled with signage. **Intermediate Level and Stone Masonry Interpretive Area (9 & 10)** - Excavation and have stairs down into each area exiting at grade. A price for removal of material was not provided and an email has been sent to Brian Kent. Approximately \$35,000 to repair and infill foundation walls, stone steps with railings. **Park Overlook/Bench (11)** – \$14,000 - Relocation of existing trees and the installation of a bench. Discussion followed in regard to planting new trees rather than relocating existing trees. **Lawn (12)** – Creating a real lawn. Two prices available – Mr. Kent's and Mr. Hunter's. Mr. Ursini noted at the last meeting, the Committee had voted to have Mr. Hunter do the work. Mrs. DeCarli stated Mr. Hunter has done a great job clearing out the area. **Pavilion (13)** – Would need an engineer to look at the slab as it's not stable (cellar under it). This could be worked into the pavilion bid. **Kayak Put-In (15)** – No pricing provided. Mr. Warner spoke in regard to the email showing how Mr. Hunter was able to kayak from channel almost to the river. Noted the Cove is cutting its own channel through the marsh. Discussion followed in regard to flooding helping to clean the channel out; possibly creating a park employee position; talking to other towns to see how they handle their parks; weekly trash pickup; and people calling the state police when incidents are taking place. Mrs. DeCarli noted that people from other areas do walk the train tracks to use the beach. Mr. McCane asked if a port-

o-let be brought in. **Concrete Slab for Stage (16)** - \$5,000. This area would be used for concerts and events. Mr. Ursini stated this area is closer to the water than the map depicts. Mr. Ursini suggested eliminating the boardwalk (17) in order to save some money. Mr. Cummings voiced concern over music being played in an area where birds, etc., are located. Mr. Ursini stated music would only be four or five times maximum. A brief discussion followed in regard to installing electricity and how the Committee is floating ideas. **Cove Boardwalk (17)** - \$80,000 – A DEEP permit would be required. Noted flood waters and debris would create problems with the boardwalk. A low priority. **Observation Deck (19)** - \$100,000. This would be in the area of the water tower. Mr. Ursini stated this was an area for people who may have disabilities to allow them a place to view the Cove. Mr. Ursini suggested the viewing area be an earth area with a small split rail fence for safety. Mr. Cummings asked why people couldn't just walk down into the Cove. Mr. Warner stated the grade is too significant and the Committee and town are legally responsible for making the site compliant (reasonable accommodations). Discussion followed in regard to what type of material will be used on the pathway to the river (stone dust) and the cost of materials for the observation deck (wood, gravel, etc.) driving the cost up. **Downstream Kayak Put-In (20)** – no cost provided. Mr. Cummings stated he didn't see anyone using it. Mr. Ursini stated it was another option. **Site Utilities - Electrical** – Mr. Warner stated there is a portable well on site and water would be nice to have. Pull box - \$1,300.00 and underground electric - \$17,500.00.

Mr. Ursini spoke in regard to a previous discussion the Committee had about clearing out the former McCane parcel to create a gathering area. Mr. Cummings stated he's very much against the proposal.

Mr. Warner asked the Committee what are the priorities. Discussion followed in regard to hiring a structural engineer; leaving the opening of the turbine open and constructing a level of steps in order to look out as well as safety railing; use a Rockfall grant for the pollinator garden; split rail fencing along the main pathway; stone dusting the river road; step foundation; specifications required when using state funding; making the base of the pavilion area safe; removal of the graffiti; and security cameras/signage.

MOTION: Dan Ursini motioned to approve the payment of \$2,200 for the removal of graffiti at Higganum Cove now. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Ursini stated he has three quotes (range from \$2,000 to \$5,000) and will get more background.

Mr. Warner to create a priorities list based on tonight's discussion.

3. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 8 September 2022, 6:00 p.m.