

**TOWN OF HADDAM
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2022
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

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

DUE TO A DOUBLE BOOKING OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER, THE START OF THE MEETING WAS DELAYED SLIGHTLY. BOTH COMMITTEES AGREED TO MEET ON EITHER END OF THE MEETING ROOM.

Mr. Schwing, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

Mr. Schwing stated even though there was no one from the public present, he would like to add Public Comment. Mr. Teran agreed. Mr. Schwing stated this will keep the meeting structured. The Committee agreed.

MOTION: Peter Baird motioned to add Public Comment to the agenda. Tim Teran second. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Public Comment

There was no from the public in attendance.

2. Approval of Minutes

Prior to the approval of the minutes, Mr. Ursini noted there were items that should be followed up on and should the Committee do so tonight.

Mr. Warner stated the State is going to require a resolution from the Board of Selectmen (BOS) accepting the money. The State needed a budget and that is in their legal office now.

Mr. Ursini spoke in regard to whether the Committee should vote on having Higganum Cove be a park forever; and asked if that was something the Committee intended on doing. Mr. Warner stated the Town doesn't have a definition of a park and the Cove is public property. Mr. Teran asked how the Committee would insure that the Cove remains public land for a park versus the Town deciding to sell the parcel. Mr. Baird stated a different BOS may have a different view of what the Committee is suggesting noting that there was a previous BOS that wasn't interested in the parcel at all. Discussion followed.

MOTION: Dan Ursini motioned to approve the 11 August 2022 minutes as submitted. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Discussion on Funding Priorities

Mr. Warner stated in order to spend the \$280,000 from DEEP the Committee has to sign a contractual agreement and provide DEEP with a draft budget. Mr. Warner distributed/reviewed a preliminary budget with the Committee (copy on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and the Land Use Dept., Exhibit A).

Connection to the Center – Rossi property to the bridge – Mr. Warner walked this area with the town's engineer and numbers are being formulated. Problems are at both ends – the culvert, only 24 feet at the bridge (too narrow to encourage walking), therefore, some type of walkway on the culvert is needed and the guide rail area (will need to cut guide rail and cannot terminate with a blunt end; potentially pull guide rail back closer to the brook). Discussion followed in regard to multi-use trails (10-12 feet wide) - location of the stream and Haddam Land Trust (they own some of the property) - may be obstacles. Mr. Teran stated the boardwalk at Chatfield Hollow is a beautiful example. Mr. Warner stated it is, but very expensive. Mr. Warner stated an estimate received from Jacobson for a multi-use trail and the boardwalk alone from Rossi to the bridge was over \$1 million. Discussion followed. \$150,000 State/\$15,000 Local/\$165,000 Total.

Areas 7, 8, and 9 – Turbine and Foundations – Mr. Warner stated this involves filling/leveling of Area 8 – Turbine; and rather than covering it, construct some type of structure (approximately three steps) that people can step up on to look down into the turbine and see the waterfall. Mr. Baird suggested bringing a step ladder down to the site to see how high the structure may need to be. Mr. Ursini suggested a couple of steps and a platform 6 feet wide by 20 feet long. Mr. Warner stated this could possibly an Eagle Scout project. \$15,000 State/\$30,000 Local/\$45,000 Total.

Areas 9 and 10 - Foundations - Excavate the area so you step down into Area 9, down farther into Area 10, and then walk out at grade in the area where the pavilion will be. The only concern would be the structural integrity of the walls. \$45,000/Mr. Kent's number.

Areas 13 and 14- Pavilion – Cover the concrete slab with some type of reinforced stamped concrete (Jacobson can handle this), the pavilion, and heavy-duty picnic tables. Mr. Schwing stated a fund raiser could be held if the Committee would like a fancier pavilion. Mr. Teran asked what people in town might be willing to invest in – a brick in a wall/walkway for their ancestors, a bench with a plaque on it, etc. Mr. Teran stated he believes the more excitement the Committee can generate for this project the more it will benefit the project as a whole. Mr. Warner stated he believes fund raisers are for specific items within a project. Discussion followed. \$50,000 State/\$25,000 Local/\$75,000 Total.

Area 15 - Kayak Launch – Mr. Warner, Mr. Ursini, and Mr. Baird were on site to discuss the creation of a launch near the band platform with the pavilion looking out over the kayak launch. Mr. Warner stated this could be done with town funds. Mr. Baird asked if people would be allowed to drive onto the site rather than carry their kayak to the launch. Mr. Warner stated that would go to staffing. Mr. Teran stated asked how the Cove will be patrolled. Mr. Warner stated that's a whole other discussion regarding management and control.

Area 16 – Concert Area – Grade/level it out to create an area where a band can sit as well as a few tables and a table top sign explaining what the site is. Mr. Ursini stated he felt this would be a great over-look of the Cove. Mr. Warner stated there is a potable water well on site and a pump could be installed (always helpful). Mr. Ursini stated some people would like a roof so there's some type of coverage (for musical equipment, etc.). Mr. Warner stated he took the roof out, put there are signs, benches, and pressed concrete. Mr. Kent's number for the slab. \$15,000 Total.

Trenching and Electric - \$17,000 Mr. Kent's numbers. Mr. Warner stated Mr. Kent projected \$17,000; however, he increased the number as he included access controls as he believes they will reach a point where they will need to close the Depot Road pull off. Nice looking guide rail and signage (No Parking).

Mr. Teran spoke in regard to being ADA compliant noting the benches in the area of the parking lot allow for seating and a view of the area if people are unable to get down into the site. Mr. Baird and Mr. Warner stated the site is too steep to make it fully compliant. Mr. Warner stated the bowl area will be the most significant piece once the wildflower garden is established, the trail marked, and people can walk down to the water. Discussion followed in regard to the garden and receiving advice from the Haddam Garden Club; delineating the trail a bit more with a couple more steps and the installation of poles with colored tops to indicate the trail; the well having been tested; and fencing. \$30,000 Local.

Area 19 - Observation Area – Mr. Warner stated there are some trees that need to be removed. Discussed having a more natural looking area – lining the area with a boulder wall, filling and grading, coming out about 20 feet to be level with Nosal Road, installation of a split rail fence, and below the boulder wall planting some kind of ground cover. Mr. Baird asked about the orange flags and the ones near the flat area – clearing this area out and placement of a bench. The view is great! Mr. Ursini stated this is already underway. \$65,000 State/Total.

Mr. Warner stated he conducted the first Cove presentation in July of 2020 and since then, he hasn't seen any new graffiti. Mr. Teran stated they're marking up the bench by the beach. Discussion followed.

Mr. Warner distributed/reviewed what the Committee has accomplished to date (on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and the Land Use Dept., Exhibit B). July 2020 initial presentation, September 2020 received funding to cut back vegetation, October 2020 went out to bid, December 2020 hired Lee Hunter to clear the vegetation, began spring clearing work, July 2021 received \$5,000 in Maintenance fund, September 2021 created the Higganum Cove Advisory Committee, used Higganum Connections line item (\$31,000) in the Capital Plan to hire Kent + Frost to create a master plan, installed Cove Welcome Map sign, created the upper ruins overlook and installed benches (repurposed from HES), created upper ruins loop trail, removed the wall and filled the hole in the pavilion area, cleared the kayak path and entry location for the Cove waterway (working on that), removed the trees from the waterway, and remove the graffiti. This fiscal year the Committee has received \$10,000 for Maintenance (doubled from last year), received \$100,000, and there is still funding remaining in the Higganum Connections and Maintenance line items.

Mr. Warner asked what else can the Committee do – grade/roll the river path (Nosal Road) down to the flat area, remove the dock, tires, and other debris from the river banks (Mr. Hunter getting a price for that), clearing the overlook, is there a better way to grade the road to reach the overlook for ADA access, signage (to the river – to the Cove), markers for the trail, and stone dust the kayak area between the pavilion and concert area. Mr. Ursini stated Mr. Hunter has already rough cleared the area.

Mr. Warner noted there's a giant tree that's across Nosal Road that will need to be removed. This could come out of the Maintenance budget item.

Mr. Baird noted there's no comment about the former McCane property. Mr. Ursini stated it was decided at the last meeting not to clear the area at this point. Mr. Teran stated he thought at one point there was discussion about creating a turnaround for ADA compliance. Mr. Baird stated he thought there was discussion about picnic tables and benches. Mr. Ursini stated as you walk into the parcel there's a round flat area where some stone dust and picnic tables could be placed, but it could be a flash point for another hang out area. Mr. Ursini also stated for cross country skiing it would be a nice point for a break – small fire and a table with seating. Mr. Warner stated the town purchased the parcel so no one would build on the site and it wouldn't hurt to pull out all of the dead trees and clean the area up. Mr. Ursini reminded the Committee that most of what has been discussed - Mr. Hunter has already priced out (Committee approved \$1,500 for maintenance two months ago).

Mr. Warner stated there was concern over the graffiti creating dust and paint into the water and the contractor had to pump out water and use a different piece of equipment (vacuum and power washer) which increased the original cost. Mr. Warner estimated there is one more cutting for this year and two for next

year (\$3,000) and there may be a little bit of remaining money for removal of the tree. In terms of the projects, Mr. Warner stated he has been using funds from the Higganum Connections line item – pulling the debris for the kayak area and clearing the loop trail. Mr. Ursini thought a bit more stone dust would be used on the kayak trail and Mr. Hunter will be pricing out the natural overlook for the State project.

Mr. Teran asked if Projects 1-6 would be covered by the remaining balance. Mr. Warner and Mr. Ursini stated it would be close. Mr. Teran asked how the Committee could get ahead of another meeting such as the August meeting. Mr. Teran suggested trash receptacles near the dog waste receptacle and a couple of signs that recommended “Carry out what you carry in”, rules of the Cove, and tow zone. Discussion followed in regard to whether the Cove should be for residents only or open to the public (article from the University of North Carolina School of Government provided by Mr. Schwing; copy on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk’s Office and the Land Use Dept.; Exhibit C); large crowds and no room (issue seems to be during the hottest summer months); and it being difficult to enforce rules. Mr. Teran stated he would like residents to see that the Committee is being thoughtful to the issues. Mr. Schwing stated the problem is not the Cove, but the falls and it has been a problem for years. Mr. Schwing spoke in regard to “Friends of the Parks” who go to clean up state parks. Discussion followed in regard to the cleanup of the graffiti and it not taking place like it used to and whether or not the Committee would like to do something in conjunction with the Fall Festival (Saturday, 29 October 2022). Mr. Ursini felt it would be good to do it now rather than waiting until May.

Mr. Warner stated the Cove needs to be something that’s unique, but there need to be some controls in place. Previously discussed by the Committee was not having the area become over run with people and one way is controlling the parking - making the existing parking to be drop off/pick off point; offsite parking; towing of vehicles at the owner’s expense; and blocking off the parking by the falls (Depot Road). Mr. Teran asked about an action plan to present to the BOS. Mr. Warner stated he could develop one. Mr. Teran asked how the Committee would go about getting the rules approved. Mr. Warner stated by bringing them before the BOS, holding a public hearing and a town meeting. Mr. Schwing asked about Park and Rec’s approval. Mr. Warner stated the rules were sent to Park and Rec, no response received, and the Committee does not need their approval. A brief discussed followed about other parks in town and the concern of individuals being disruptive at the Cove. Mrs. Batzner stated to the best of her knowledge it has not been discussed at a BOS meeting. Mr. Warner will follow up.

The Committee discussed when to hold their next meeting. It was determined to hold their meeting on their regular meeting night – Thursday, 13 October 2022.

A brief discussion followed into the Fall Festival and renting golf carts to get people down into the Cove to show what has been done to date. Mr. Ursini will research rental costs.

4. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 13 October 2022, 6:00 p.m.