

**TOWN OF HADDAM  
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
COMMUNITY CENTER  
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441  
THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2023  
UNAPPROVED MINUTES  
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

**ATTENDANCE**

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

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

**1. Public Comments**

There was no public in attendance.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION:** Peter Baird motioned to approve the 14 September 2023 minutes as submitted. Dorothy Gillespie second. Motion carried unanimously.

**3. a. Preserve Designation for Higganum Cove**

Mr. Schwing reported that he had emailed the Higganum Cove Action Plan, as compiled by Mr. Ursini, to all Committee members (Exhibit A – 4 pages; copy on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and Land Use Office). Mr. Ursini stated he put the document together from the minutes, emails, and memory and that this document is a living document that Committee members can add too.

Mr. Schwing stated he went before the Board of Selectmen (BOS) earlier this year regarding the designation of the Cove as park; however, at the Committee's September meeting, there was discussion pertaining to designating the Cove a preserve rather than a park. Mr. Schwing also stated the Committee, if given permanent status, would then be able to determine what would happen on the property. Mr. Schwing noted that a park would be open to active recreation.

Mr. Ursini stated that he had emailed the Committee the differences between a park and a preserve (Exhibit B; copy on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and Land Use Office); and given the Cove's unique environment, a preserve would seem to be a better fit. Mrs. Gillespie agreed. Mr. Baird also agreed, but asked how the difference in designation would change the usage, etc. Mr. Ursini stated he didn't think it would; noting that Mr. Warner had discussed at previous meetings the difference between active vs. passive activities. Typically passive activities do not need a large volume of parking and if existing parking is improved, probably could get 10 solid parking spaces in addition to five along the curve; and the proposed parking at Rossi would serve the whole of Higganum Center not just the Cove. Mr. Baird asked about the potential of conducting a concert. Mr. Ursini stated he believes the Town could

do as they please. Mr. Baird stated he would rather have a concert sponsored by the Town or by a town committee. Mr. Ursini stated given previous discuss of how to limit and/or control crowds, the Committee wouldn't promote a large scale activity. Mr. Warner stated any requests for use of the Cove would come before the Committee and the Committee would need to create an ordinance outlining what is allowable and activities would need to be approved by the Committee. Discussion followed in regard to expectations for parks vs. preserves. Mr. Ursini noted that when you look at where people can walk, it is less than 2 acres out of 14 acres so there are already limitations on the site.

Mr. Schwing stated he would make a motion after discussing Item 3b.

#### **b. Request Higganum Cove Committee (HCC) to be Permanent Committee/Commission**

Mr. Schwing reported there has been discussion about making the Committee permanent and noted that this was the last official meeting of the Committee until the new BOS reappoints the Committee. Mr. Schwing asked those present who would like to remain on the Committee. All present stated yes. Mr. Schwing will contact Mrs. DeCarli and Mr. Teran to get their input. Mr. Warner stated Bob McGarry, First Selectman, had asked him to speak to the Committee about reappointment; therefore, it would appear as if he plans are reappointing everyone.

Mr. Schwing stated if the Committee is going to request the Cove be designated a preserve, it would be best to also request the Committee be designated as permanent. Mr. Schwing stated there will be a meeting scheduled in 2024, probably February, where the Committee will be officially on the BOS agenda.

Mr. Warner stated in his opinion, if the Committee wants to get this accomplished, they would need to put a proposal outlining what they would like to do in front of the BOS. Mr. Warner stated he's looked at the Park and Recreation ordinance and believes the Committee should model their ordinance after it. Mr. Warner also stated Mr. McGarry agreed that the Committee cannot just make a recommendation, but need to put supporting documentation in front of the BOS (noted all three support the proposal). Mr. Warner stated he believes it should be done in December noting that it would need to go before a town meeting. Mr. Baird stated the committee would be appointed (staggered appointments). Mr. Schwing will take the Park and Rec ordinance and model it for the Committee and then send it to all Committee members for their review.

**MOTION:** Ed Schwing motioned to recommend to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to designate Higganum Cove as a preserve and request that the Higganum Cove Committee (HCC) become a permanent committee/commission. Dan Ursini second. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee members felt a good working session prior to the February 2024 BOS meeting would be important. Mr. Ursini stated the Action Plan could be a support document when presenting to the BOS as well as the park vs. preserve document.

#### **c. Meeting with Board of Selectmen (BOS) 2024**

Mr. Schwing stated he will ask for the Committee to be put on the 12 February 2024 BOS agenda.

#### **d. Review of Rules and Regulations / Haddam Elementary School (HES) Attendant Duties**

**Rules/Regulations** - Mr. Ursini stated the Committee is aware that they will be adopting an ordinance and will update the document for the January meeting.

**HES Attendant Duties** – Mr. Schwing stated the Committee supports this permanent part-time position. Mr. Warner stated the Committee needs to make sure the funding stays in the budget (2024-2025 budget requests in process). Mr. Warner explained that it would be nice to have someone who knows something



about the buildings. A job description has been drafted by Mr. Warner that includes duties within the Cove. Mr. Ursini stated there should be something that would signify the individual is a town employee. Mr. Warner stated existing funding needs to be used now to show that it's needed.

#### **4. Safety Rails around Pollinator Garden**

**Safety Rails** - Mr. Warner stated Durham Fence has been onsite, measurements were taken, and it was suggested black posts and railing rather than chain link fencing be used. The Committee discussed the need for something to grab onto and the railing would suit the purpose. Mr. Warner will obtain a quote.

**Pollinator Garden** - Mrs. Gillespie asked for an update regarding the pollinator garden. Mr. Warner stated he had applied for a Rockfall grant (confirmed receipt of application). If awarded the grant, this would double the Committee's funding and allow for the hiring of a landscape architect. Grant awarded in April.

#### **5. Next Proposed Projects Using Remainder of this Year's Capital Funds – Improve Drop Off Area / Add Stones to Viewing Platform at Falls**

Mr. Schwing stated there is approximately \$44,000 left. Potential uses: improve parking area, add stones to viewing platform at falls, or safety railing. Mr. Baird asked if additional considerations for the future – placards (natural/environmental/historical) had been considered. Mr. Ursini suggested the Welcome sign and kiosks. Mr. Warner stated he asked for \$3,000 in the Rockfall Grant for interpretative signage. Mr. Baird and Mr. Ursini stated perhaps a sign by the water outlining the ale wives and herrings (can contact Steve Gephard) as well as one for the turbine or just one in this location. Mr. Schwing will contact Steve Gephard and Lisa Malloy. Mr. Warner spoke in regard to the signage in front of the Brainerd Memorial Library (text is complete; sign needs to be made and put in place). Mrs. Gillespie asked if a sign could be placed down by the marsh referencing the eco-system. Mr. Baird spoke in regard to a kayak stand. Mr. Ursini stated it's on the plan.

Items for consideration: entry parking lot, foundation/turbine overlook, safety railings, welcome/rules sign installation, kiosks/trail signs.

**MOTION:** Dan Ursini motioned to recommend that with the remaining balance of \$44,000 in Capital funds be used on the turbine foundation area for a natural platform/overlook, parking lot reconfiguration, safety railings within the pollinator garden and wherever needed, and Welcome/Rules sign installation, kiosks, and other trail signage. Tim McCane second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Warner stated when you look at the concrete slab where the hole's located, next to it you can see where it's settling. If it were to collapse, safety fencing would need to go around it. Mr. Warner stated DEEP brought up that the area under the slab was not remediated and we do not know what's under there. The area is in the flood plain. Perhaps this would be a project to use state funding – environmental, structural, remove all the old concrete, and build into a formal kayak launch. Mr. Baird stated this will not be a kayak launch for beginners. Mr. Ursini stated there has been discussion about providing some information – tides, intermediate to experienced kayakers. Mr. Warner noted that the channel has been reshaped.

Mr. Baird stated a couple of people have commented on the split rail fence; and have asked if split rail fencing can be installed in the area of the existing chain link fence. Mrs. Gillespie stated chain link fencing takes away from the aesthetics of the site. Mr. Warner stated the split rail fencing cost approximately \$2,800 for 100 feet of fencing.

## **6. Adjournment**

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Bunny Hall Batzner*

Bunny Hall Batzner

Recording Clerk

**The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 14 December 2023.**

# ***Higganum Cove Action Plan***

## **Higganum Cove Committee/Board of Selectman**

1. Higganum Cove designated and protected as a preserve permanently
2. HCC made permanent commission
3. HCC established as a Commission modeled after the Parks and Rec responsibilities and authority to make Rules and Regulations enforceable by current town ordinance
4. Define Higganum Cove as a Preserve. See Description Comparison vs Park
5. Haddam residents engaged (Cove Public Comments Meeting) on recommended Cove Preserve description/limitations, management protection controls and development plans.
6. HCC Meeting with BOS scheduled in January 2024 to discuss items 1-5 for agreement and implementation

## **Cove Rules & Enforcement**

1. Complete Cove Rules / Welcome to Higganum Cove Sign in concert with Town Of Haddam Parks and Recreation Ordinance
2. Design/Create/Install Welcome and Cove Rules sign
3. Establish Community Attendant with authority to distribute parking tickets, engage tow truck operators, and escalation to State Police as warranted as well as being recourse for town residents and guests needing guidance at the park.
4. Evaluate the Use of Haddam VFF for Security, First Aide, Incident escalation during Summer weekends, Holidays and special events. Having a professional presences in marked vehicles is a well proven method for prevention and a sense of safety for visitors. 10am-4pm/Best Effort.
5. Determine, if necessary, other controls for Cove Preserve overuse.

## **Funding**

1. Town Of Haddam \$130,000 to date. \$10,000 per year park maintenance. \$100,000 Budgeted for FY 2026 (July 1, 2025). Current Town funding balance: \$44,0000.

Recommended projects for remaining balance: Entry Parking Lot, Foundation/Turbine Overlook, Welcome/Rules Sign Installation, Ready Kiosks/Trail Signs.

2. State Of Connecticut Grant \$280,000 matching grant 3/1. None utilized at this time. Mid 2025 ETA with next town budget grant of \$100K.

Major concern utilizing State funding as noted and discussed in previous HCC meetings due to regulations and costs: Flood management requirements/permits, Surveys, Geotech, diversity database, prohibitive engineering costs ( \$57,000 to engineer a simple prefab bride), high bidding specs costs and loss of sole control for the Town of Haddam permanently.

3. Private Grants - RockFall, Other
4. Local Businesses
5. Town Fundraisers - See Haddam Town Library Brick Memorials \$100 Each

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EXHIBIT A (4 PAGES)



## **Cove Overlook & Multi Use Options**

### ***Design, Specs, Bid Process, Acceptance and Town Of Haddam Funding Complete***

1. Construction Underway with adjustment/enhancement decisions as they develop.
2. Final Railing Design ( Stainless steel cable for clear viewing)
3. Partial Platform Cover options
4. Power needs and implementation options
5. Final Platform floor material after base material settling.
6. Bench/sitting options on Overlook

## **Upper Ruins Trail & Flower Garden**

1. Continued enhancements and maintenance of hiking trail, river shoreline, vegetation.
2. Trail Signage/Hiking use only
3. Flower Garden Specs
4. Rockfall Grant/Town Funding for Flower Garden
5. Flower Garden Bidding process for creation/implementation
6. Flower Garden on going enhancements and maintenance

## **Cove Parking**

### **Entry Parking**

1. Evaluate if hump is ledge (Lee digs test pits)
2. Redesign for easier parking/remove hump if no ledge

### **Rossi Parking ( Part of Developers Proposal)**

1. Finalize parking area boundaries
2. Relocate dumpsters
3. Town to level and solidify parking surface with road millings
4. Visibly mark off parking area boundaries
5. Paint parking spaces
6. Install HCP Parking Sign
7. Install Pedestrian Caution signs on roadway

### **Falls Parking**

1. Install Barriers at Falls turnoff once Rossi Parking lot complete

## **Foundation/Turbine Overlook**

1. Build a level natural platform in front of the current fence
2. Adjust/add to current fence for safe viewing
3. Install Kiosk for original Factory/Turbine information

### **Signage/Information Kiosks**

1. Work with Historical Society, DEEP (Steve Gephard), HCC to develop a plan and display options for Cove information to be shared.
2. Identifying Grants for Kiosks implementation
3. Cove Logo Developed for Kiosks, Signs, Town Communications (involve town residents)

### **River Trail**

1. Continually observe the trail for any major erosion conditions to be resolved
2. Enhance the 2 major River Trail Overlooks with leveling material, benches and kiosks
3. Work with Haddam Eagle Scouts Project at First Overlook
4. Ensure pathway is level/firm from new Cove Park Overlook to first River Trail Overlook

### **Cove Lawn/Foundation Pathways**

1. Define main Lawn area for viewing events on Overlook Platform and Picnicking
2. Add small border flower gardens/natural plantings
3. Level Lawn where there are small holes, depressions, rough grass clumps, etc
4. Enhance Seating on current stones and ruins areas were safe
5. Remove material piled up against foundation rocks to be level with current center of foundation pathways
6. Create stone dust pathway through center of foundations with side areas grass.

### **Kayak Launch Enhancements**

1. Identify easier access options to Cove River Branch
2. Yearly Spring maintenance of Cove branch after Winter storms/Spring floods
3. Evaluate Kayak rack storage
4. Provide Kayaking options/map for users

### **Lower Cove Overlook**

1. Review options to fix or cover with decking broken cement and gaps past the current stable picnic table area. Once repaired, railing at the outer edge of the platform may be necessary for safety.

### **Future Picnic Pavillion site**

Until the many prohibitive issues with the site are answered (flood zone, DEEP permits, engineering costs, possible removal of the entire foundation area for any major structures/use, overall prohibitive costs to implement) stabilize the area for simple use (picnic tables, small events).

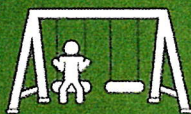
1. Fill the current gaps noticeable with solid materials
2. Level the entire platform with processed gravel/stone dust
3. Add Picnic tables
4. Clean Graffiti off the wall
5. Keep as a simple passive picnic area?

### ***Higganum Cove Committee Completed Accomplishments***

1. Installed Higganum Cove Welcome Sign/Information Boards, Pet Waste & Trash Stations.
2. Created Upper Ruins Overlook with 2 benches
3. Created the Upper Ruins Hiking Trail and Observation areas. This included major tree and vegetation clearing, Rock walls, Trail Construction and River front access.
4. Major Graffiti Removal throughout the park ruins, turbine foundation, falls rocks
5. Created award winning Higganum Cove Master Plan with Kent & Frost Associates
6. Created Kayak Launch area and pathway
7. Major Cleanup and debris removal along the Higganum River Branch through the Cove
8. River Trail upgrade/enhancements: Fallen Trees and brush removal, widening of trail pathway were needed, cleanup of large dumped debris along the trail and river front and the creation of 3 River Trail Overlooks of the Cove
9. Large Dead Tree removal (12) and cleanup of upper pathways
10. Creation of Falls/River viewing corridors for future Cove Overlook and pathway down from Park entry area.
11. Applied for and received \$280,000 State Matching Grant (3/1) for future use
12. Worked with Haddam Historical Society and former DEEP staff for town tour and presentation of the Cove industrial history and environmental life.
13. Designed and created the blueprint for the construction of a multi use cove overlook, funded by the town, which is now underway for Phase I completion by December 2023.
14. Developed on going relationships with several town organizations for cleanup/maintenance actions, future projects and support.
15. Split Rail Fence installed along 80ft of pathway into the park



## PURPOSE



Purchased for development of an active recreation purpose such as:

- Ball fields
- Trails
- Water parks
- Playgrounds



- Protect and manage a natural feature
- Conserve a watershed
- Enhance water quality
- Provide habitat for an endangered species
- Preserve a historic place or landform

## ACTIVITIES



Active recreation such as:

- Softball
- Soccer
- Skateboarding
- Swimming



Passive recreation such as:

- Hiking
- Birdwatching
- Walking your leashed dog
- Paddlesports

## OUR WORK



- Provide afterschool programming
- Manage adult sports leagues
- Instruct swim lessons
- Yoga classes



- Remove invasive plants
- Restore native habitats
- Provide nature based programs
- Build and maintain natural surface trails

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EXHIBIT B