

**TOWN OF HADDAM
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
THURSDAY, 11 MAY 2023
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

A	Peter Baird
X	Sue DeCarli
X	Dorothy Gillespie (Arrived 6:08 p.m.)
X	Tim McCane
X	Ed Schwing, Chairman
X	Tim Teran
X	Dante Ursini (Left at 6:47 p.m.)
X	Bill Warner,
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

Mr. Schwing, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Dan Ursini motioned to approve the 13 April 2023 minutes as submitted. Tim Teran second. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Public Comments

No public was present.

Mr. Schwing stated he felt it was important that the Committee be allowed to conduct their business and that members of the audience not interject their comments/questions until after the fact. Mr. Schwing stated prior to adjourning a meeting when there are members of the public in attendance, he will ask if there is any public comment/questions. The Committee was agreeable.

3. Discussion on Cove Future

Mr. Schwing reported at the 13 April 2023 meeting the Committee had discussion future projects at the Cove; and asked Mr. Warner if he had any additional information pertaining to the use of the DEEP grant money.

Rockfall Grant - Mr. Warner reported he had inquired about the status of the grant and was informed that the application had not been received even though he had received confirmation that it had; therefore, the Committee/Town will not be receiving the grant as it has already been awarded to another applicant. Mr. Warner noted that this is a once-a-year offering.

Pollinator Garden - Mr. Warner stated he believes the planting of the pollinator garden in the old ruins area would have a huge impact on the site. The Committee agreed. Mr. Warner has spoken to the State and contracts under \$10,000 are exempt from competitive bidding. Mr. Warner has done an amendment to the budget with the State money for \$8,500 for the plantings in accordance with the plan. Mr. Warner is currently waiting to hear from DEEP's legal department to see if they approve the amendment. A brief discussion followed regarding the cost of plants and labor and the planting plan (2014 restoration plan is not the most recently proposed plan).

Lawn Maintenance - Mr. Warner reported Lee Hunter mowed the Cove today (\$1,000) and with one more cutting in June it would leave a remaining balance of approximately \$1,700. This would need to be used by 1 July 2023 or it's lost.

Interpretive/Historical Signage - Mr. Schwing stated the signs are approximately \$700 apiece and perhaps a couple of signs (one of each) could be purchased. Mr. McCane stated Steve Gephard had indicated the aluminum signs could be mounted on stands or on a fence. Mr. Schwing stated the company, as recommended by Mr. Gephard, creates signs for non-profits, schools, etc. Mrs. DeCarli stated Mr. Gephard also indicated the signs retain their color (do not fade from the sun) and clean-up is relatively easy. Mr. Schwing will contact the company through Mr. Gephard regarding costs. Discussion followed with it being noted that Lisa Malloy, Director, Haddam Historical Society, was present during the discussion with Mr. Gephard. Mr. Teran stated the Committee should contemplate QR Codes, whether it is included now or a space is left to add one at a later date, as one day the Committee may want to add the Cove to the digital world. Mr. Warner will submit a purchase order request to encumber the funding, but he would need the name of the company. Mr. Schwing will provide the information.

Budget - Mr. Warner reviewed the budget: \$280,000 in State funding, \$100,000 in current Capital Plan, and an additional \$100,000 in the Capital Plan for 2026. Discussion followed in regard to the timing for spending the State funding and receiving the 2026 Capital Plan funding. Mr. Warner stated unless there's a big project, it will be difficult to spend the State funding. Mr. Teran suggested the digging out of foundations, installation of steps, and creating the viewing platform as one project. Mr. Warner stated the trouble with the State bidding process is documentation is required. Discussion followed. Mr. Teran asked if Mr. Kent could develop a plan to satisfy the State's requirement.

DEEP Flood Plain Agency - Pavilion - Mr. Warner spoke in regard to a meeting held with the DEEP Flood Plain Agency who weren't concern over the proposal for a pavilion and the excavation of the cellar area; however, the environmental contamination/ remediation people expressed concern because they're aware of the site being a superfund site. The main area of concern was where the slab is located as EPA did not clean under it. The remediation people want to know what's under the slab. Mr. Ursini asked who gets to rule on the matter.

Mr. Ursini distributed a handout as to what the Committee agreed to at the 13 April 2023 meeting on how to potentially spend the \$100,000 (on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and the Land Use Dept.). The Committee reviewed item by item. **#1 – Upper Cove Overlook** – Mr. Warner stated this item is currently in the State funding as it references the plan. This will need to go out for bid. **#2 - Mid-Cove Overlook** – Not in the plan and not overly expensive. Town funding. **#3 – Removal of Dock, Tires, and Carpet** – Completed. **#4 – Removal of dead Ash Trees** – Expensive. **#5 – Define simple parking area on Rossi property** - Not huge monetary amounts. Clean up for next event. **#6 Mark a pathway on Depot Road** – Mr. Warner stated he feels this should be done. Briefly discussed painting a "path" or arrows in the road or the installation of two signs in either direction indicating a pedestrian walkway. Committee felt there should be some form of designation within the road. Not huge monetary amounts. Clean up for next event. Town funding. **#7 – Level current parking are (remove hump)** – Mr. Warner stated he believes the hump is ledge. Mr. Ursini stated Mr. Hunter didn't believe so and the only way to find out is to do some digging; and if there is ledge, perhaps it can be chipped down. Mr. Ursini stated if there's going to be viability for people with mobility issues, there has to be a decent place for them to park (handicapped approved). If the hump is removed, a small stonewall should be constructed. State funding. **#8 – Signage Costs** – If grant is not successful.

Mr. Warner stated at this time, he felt the Committee should focus on the Upper Overlook. The Committee agreed.

Mr. Warner reported that he took Ann Harter, Finance Director, on a tour of the Cove, today. She was impressed with the work done.

Discussion followed regarding the overlook, the excavation of the foundations, the pavilion area, and the need for an engineer.

Mr. Warner stated in 2026 a big project that would need to go out for bid for an engineer should be undertaken. Mr. Ursini asked if some process gravel could be added to the concrete slab area. Mrs. Gillespie and Mrs. DeCarli spoke in regard to installing the split rail fencing (safety issue). Mr. Warner stated since the cutting/clearing has been taking place the poison ivy is flourishing. A brief discussion followed in regard to how best to mitigate it.

Cleanup of Rossi Site - Mr. Ursini stated he followed up with Bob McGarry, First Selectman, regarding cleaning up the Rossi property and Mr. McGarry had indicated that he would speak to Chris Corsa, Assistant Director of Public Works, about cleaning up the metal, piping, and material on the site. Mr. Ursini stated Mr. Hunter has indicated he can move his dumpster. Mr. Ursini also stated Mr. McGarry had indicated that Public Works could install "No Parking" signs past the falls where everyone parks (should be installed by Memorial Day). The turnout area will not be signed, but at a future date it will be properly blocked off. Mr. Warner noted the State budget has access control within it. Discussion followed.

Logo - Mr. Ursini also discussed the potential for a logo and perhaps the high school art class could conduct a contest. Mr. Warner talked about a logo contest conducted by the City of Middletown and it being open to the Town.

Garbage Disposal - Mr. Warner suggested the installation of a garbage can. Mr. Schwing suggested Pete's Waste Removal be contacted as they already provide garbage disposal to the Town.

Emails - Mrs. Gillespie asked about the emails collected from the Site Walk and sending out a brief update to those who signed up. Mr. Teran spoke in regard to the Friends of the Cove website and perhaps the two should be merge for better management. Mrs. Gillespie stated she sent out Thank you notes to Steve Gephard and Lisa Malloy. Mr. Schwing asked who has the Facebook page. Mr. Teran stated Peter Baird.

Discussion returned to the planting plan (2014 plan and referenced in the master plan), the pollinator garden and signage located in the Town of Chester, developing a plan and obtaining quotes, and contacting the UConn Master Garden Program and the high school (H-K, Middletown Vo-Ag). Mrs. DeCarli suggested Nancy Balleck be contacted to view the site and develop a plan. Mr. Teran suggested the plan developed by Mr. Kent be shared with Ms. Balleck.

Park Designation - Mr. Schwing stated he would like to make a request to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to make Higganum Cove an official park. In this way, it would protect the property from the potential of sale or development should a BOS come in that is not in favor of the site. The Town would need to vote on this matter. Mr. Schwing would like to discuss this topic further.

Recap - Mr. Teran asked for a recap of what has been discussed regarding the funding. Mr. Warner stated another cutting in June leaving a balance of \$1,700 (use it or lose it by 1 July), new funding available beginning 1 July, talk to sign company, overlook drawing to be obtained in order to put project out to bid (Mr. McCane indicated he knew someone who could produce a drawing) and this would come from the \$100,000 in the Capital Plan, removal of dead trees (Committee believes this is a priority/safety matter; funding could come from the \$100,000), fencing (at top; split rail; volunteer project), wildflower garden, and eradicating the poison ivy (Mrs. Gillespie will research the matter). Discussion followed at length with it being noted that if people get poison ivy after visiting the Cove they might not come back.

Directional Signs Pole - Mr. McCane stated he had sent a photo of a cedar pole that could be used for the directional signs to Mr. Warner. A brief discussion followed.

4. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

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Recording Clerk

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 8 June 2023, 6:00 p.m.

1. Upper Cove Overlook/Minor Foundation Excavation: Overlook build will use material from the foundation excavation. method/ dimensions for both TBD
2. Mid Cove Overlook surfaced with stone or wood chips with Benches. Pathway between overlooks graded flat with natural material of the path (no stone dust). Possible additional Bench at another overlook.
3. Remove Docks and Tires ,Carpet on River Path :COMPLETE
4. Remove all dead Ash trees (Approx 12) between parking lot and and first overlook. Also remove some small dead tress covered in vines on each side of the overlook.
5. Define a simple parking area with signage on lower Rossi property (area where we parked) for future events.
6. If necessary mark as a walkway on depot road or you use signage for walk from Rossi parking area to the bridge.
7. Level the current parking area (remove hump) for appropriate handicap parking. This would include resurfacing the pathway from the parking lot to finished path Lee constructed for the overlook and drainage in a similar way.
8. Signage Costs if grant is not successful.

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