

**TOWN OF HADDAM  
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
FORMER HADDAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM  
272 SAYBROOK ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441  
THURSDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2023  
UNAPPROVED MINUTES  
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

**ATTENDANCE**

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

**GUESTS:** Lee Hunter and Brian Babbitt.

**DUE TO A DOUBLE BOOKING OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER, THE MEETING WAS RELOCATED TO THE FORMER HADDAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (HES).**

Mr. Warner called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

**1. Public Comments**

There was no public in attendance.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION:** Peter Baird motioned to approve the 10 August 2023 minutes as submitted. Tim Teran second. Motion carried unanimously.

**3. Discussion on Overlook Bid Results**

Mr. Warner distributed a two (2) page sketch of the proposed overlook noting that although it is not an engineered plan (not what the bid called for), the concept is what the Committee was looking for. Mr. Warner reported the top of the proposed overlook is 20 feet by 20 feet and demonstrated the size by having it taped out on the floor. The Committee stated it's larger than what they had visualized. Mr. Warner stated from the road there's almost another 30-35 feet going into the Cove. Discussion followed in regard to the addition of benches/picnic tables taking up space and making it appear smaller; the potential of a small concert or presentation being conducted on the space. Mr. Baird asked how tall the elevation was. Mr. Warner stated four (4) feet, but it may have to be taller once discussion is over.

Mr. Warner reported the bid was advertised in the newspaper twice and posted on the Town's website (complied with the purchasing guidelines) and Lee Hunter was the only respondent. Mr. Warner stated he has spoken to Mr. Hunter regarding the grading of a little dip to smooth it out more and removal of the second wall. Mr. Warner stated he questioned why there was a need for two (2) flat areas and the expense of the extra wall. Mr. Ursini stated the second tier would create an opportunity for additional

picnic tables. Mr. Teran stated the installation of additional plantings to avoid some mowing may be the better option. Mrs. DeCarli stated perhaps people would rather put down a blanket for a picnic. Mr. Warner stated the area is sloped and felt it would be better to create terraces with the fill and then seeding them in – doesn't believe it's worth paying all the money for the wall. Mr. Warner stated stairs are included coming up from the road and then stairs up to the road area. Mr. Teran suggested the steps be wider, deeper, longer, it would be better for older people. Mr. Warner stated the project will evolve as it is being built.

Mr. Warner asked the Committee if the corners should be rounded off (soften it slightly), because in his opinion, it appears to be sticking out. The Committee agreed.

Mr. Warner stated Mr. Hunter had provided a photo of some railing, but it will be up to the Committee as to the type to be installed. Mr. Warner noted that railing will be required all around the overlook and that Mr. Hunter will install the railing as well. Discussion followed regarding wire cable to allow better viewing especially for someone who may be in a wheelchair or a child, they would be able to see more through the cable. Mr. Warner stated Mr. Hunter will clear out the big Sycamore tree and the junk around it, grade the area, place three-quarter inch stone to assist with drainage. The tower pillars (historic) are to remain.

Mr. Ursini asked if there was any discussion regarding stone vs. pavers. Mr. Warner stated the sketch is too busy. Mr. Ursini agreed and stated it can also get very expensive. Discussion followed in regard to the potential for the pavers needing to be reset once the fill begins to settle; the ability for wheelchairs, walkers, etc., being able to move over the top smoothly; and the use of stone dust (Mrs. DeCarli and Mr. Ursini agreed the top shouldn't be left just stone dust).

Mr. Warner stated for the future, the area should be designed to handle a half roof to protect people from the sun and rain. Mr. Warner pointed out the area for four (4) sono tubes to take the posts for a half roof. The Committee agreed. Mrs. DeCarli asked if the roof would be completely flat or slightly tilted. No response given.

Mr. Baird asked about cost. Mr. Warner stated Mr. Hunter started out with a very informal estimate of \$38,000 but he brought in Babbitt Stoneworks who helped with the upper foundation/trail area setting stairs, etc., and has now submitted a bid of \$67,235 (includes everything).

Mr. Ursini asked the Committee if they should prepare for electricity, at least conduit, in the future. Mr. Teran agreed. Mr. Ursini stated Mr. Hunter has reviewed the site and there's a pole right on the corner. Mr. Ursini stated Mr. Hunter has also voiced concern over the rotted drainage pipe and suggested he remove that. Mr. Warner agreed and stated that Mr. Hunter could raise the area up. Mr. Teran asked if Mr. Hunter could subcontract the electrical work. Mr. Warner suggested the electrical be separate from the bid as it was not included. Discussion followed with Mr. Warner stating the electrical would need to be a separate contract and making sure the proposed conduit can handle additional electrical in the future. Mrs. DeCarli stated she did not want to see lights at the Cove. Mr. Warner stated there is a well onsite and it is worthless without electricity. Mr. Teran asked if Eversource would install the connection or the entire wiring. Mr. Warner stated he would think the entire project.

Mr. Ursini asked how the hump in the parking lot would be removed or smoothed out since the overlook will be accessible to people with mobility issues. Mr. Warner stated the area will be accessible, but no formal plans discussed.

Mr. Warner stated on the bid, Mr. Hunter indicated that he and Mr. Babbitt should be able to start work in October and Hunter Recycling will be able to initiate tree work before stone work begins. Estimate the project should be done by Thanksgiving. Mr. Warner stated this will be the center piece. Mr. Teran asked if Mr. Hunter should be advised that the Committee is interested in cable rather than wrought iron.

**MOTION:** Tim Teran motioned to approve going forward with the proposal and getting modified price based on earlier discussion. Peter Baird second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. DeCarli asked if Mr. Hunter could take care of installing the split rail fence along the steep embankment that the Committee has discussed for over a year. Mr. Warner stated it's a simple thing and he can do it. Mrs. DeCarli stated the fencing needs to be installed before something happens. Mr. Teran stated it maybe something that should be put out to bid.

Mr. Ursini asked if another bid is needed for the electrical. Mr. Warner stated yes. Mr. Baird suggested the fencing be included as well.

**MOTION:** Tim Teran motioned to obtain a Request for Proposal (RFP) on installation of electrical conduit, split rail fencing on steep side of wall, and drain pipe replacement. Dan Ursini second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hunter and Mr. Babbitt arrived at 7:00 p.m. The Committee informed them that they had voted on accepting their proposal with modifications. Mr. Warner advised Mr. Hunter that the Committee had reviewed the proposal and the changes as previously discussed.

Mr. Hunter stated they will remove the lower wall making the remaining wall a little taller and create a more uniformed slope and will change the shape by rounding the edges out and blend them into the banks. Mr. Babbitt stated his original idea was more of an arc that came out 20 feet and would be the same length as the wall.

Mr. Hunter asked about footings for a roof – install pre-cast piers while it's still dug out low or put tubes in. Mr. Warner stated he spoke to the zoning enforcement officer (an architect) who indicated a footing at the bottom and four (4) sono tubes filled with concrete that can be drilled into to hook the roof too should be sufficient.

Discussed installation of stainless cable rather than railing; as the project progresses, can discuss/amend items; overlook surface (granite pavers would blend into the wall, but can leave it for a season with pea stone or stone dust to let it settle – agreed on stone dust). Mr. Babbitt stated pavers are hard to match and become dated.

Mr. Hunter stated they will place face rocks below the wall and blend the stone walkway. Mr. Babbitt asked the location of the steps. Mr. Hunter stated with the rounding of the edges, they may have to free style the steps in. Also discussed features such as a sitting bench if they have some nice rocks.

Mr. Hunter talked about the running of conduit noting that it makes sense doing it at the same time and replacement of a rotted drainage pipe (should be replaced). Mr. Hunter stated the cost to raise the two (2) foot trench, sand for backfill, sufficient process to bring the road up, and excavation - \$8,400 and to run the pipe and two (2) – two (2) inch conduits (service through one and anything in the future through the second), parts and labor - \$9,200. Mr. Warner asked if there would need to be coordination with Eversource. Mr. Hunter stated they would only be installing the conduit (not including the panel; will need to speak to the electrician – O'Brien Electric). Mr. Hunter noted putting the conduit in is one thing and putting the service in is another. Mr. Warner stated he will get a purchase order cut and work can begin. Mr. Hunter and Mr. Babbitt felt they could not begin work until mid-late October.

In regard to the pollinator garden, Mr. Warner stated he will put out a RFP for landscape companies as this portion of the project needs to get moving. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Warner stated he had provided Mr. McGarry with a job description for the proposed HES/Cove maintainer.

#### 4. Review of Rules and Regulations

Mr. Warner reported Mr. Schwing had made a good point noting that the ordinance that establishes the Committee allows for the Committee to establish rules. Mr. Warner stated the Committee did establish rules and Bob McGarry, First Selectman, did not take it to a town meeting. If the Board of Selectmen (BOS) goes forward with making the Committee permanent, then the Committee can establish the rules.

Discussion followed at length regarding designated picnic areas (no designations to date; should there be no designations; decided to leave picnicking off); cooking grills (small ones on the end of a picnic table; no charcoal grills or fires); no tents or garbage; enforcement (the need for the state police to make a presence at the Cove/falls; hiring of an attendant); onsite parking (not all of it should be strictly handicapped accessible); regulations can be amended along the way; and concern over people abusing the Cove/falls. The Committee decided to wait until the BOS votes on the designation of the Committee before moving forward with the rules/regulations.

#### 5. Input on Welcome Sign

There was no discussion pertaining to the sign.

**Scouts/Eagle Scouts Project** - Mr. Ursini reported that he had met with a scout leader in Haddam and they would like to do a project and are willing to assist at the Cove. A couple of Eagle Scouts need to do projects – possibly custom benches for the overlook and scouts raise their own funding. Mr. Ursini stated they are also interested in being a partner in maintaining the Cove – i.e. trail and general maintenance, installing berms/water bars, etc. Mr. Warner stated a potential Eagle Scout project could be the construction of the overlook roof.

**Source to Sea** - Mr. Warner stated Source to Sea could be of assistance in maintaining the Cove. Mr. Ursini stated there's a lot of trash by the river as well as some on the falls side. Source to Seas could be of assistance in cleaning up both those areas.

#### 6. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

*Bunny Hall Batzner*

Recording Clerk

**The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 12 October 2023.**