

**TOWN OF HADDAM  
HIGGANUM COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING  
HADDAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM  
SAYBROOK ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441  
THURSDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2021  
APPROVED MINUTES  
*Approved as Submitted at the 14 October 2021 Meeting***

**ATTENDANCE**

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

Mr. Warner, Town Planner, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

After introductions, Mr. Warner reviewed the following: 1) Higganum Cove Funding Request – Higganum Cove – A Community Gathering Space (Exhibit A). Mr. Warner stated he took into consideration what the town can afford, maintain, and what is realistic for the Town of Haddam. Need to think small and not interfere with the environment. 2) A map and description of a parcel of land formerly owned by Tim McCane which the town recently purchased (Exhibit B). Mr. Warner stated he believes this parcel is critical as someone could have argued that the parcel was sufficient in size to put in a well, a septic system, and a small cabin; but more importantly, it's a nice level area where there is not very much level space. The parcel has been flagged and there are no wetlands.

**1. Election of Chairman**

**MOTION:** Sue DeCarli nominated Ed Schwing for chairman. Tim Teran second. Motion carried unanimously.

Congratulations, Ed!

**2. Charge of the Higganum Cove Advisory Committee Shall be to Advise the First Selectman and the Board of Selectmen Regarding:**

Mr. Warner recommended the Committee discuss specific topics month by month and reviewed a tentative monthly schedule of topics (Exhibit C).

Mr. Warner spoke in regard to a 1995 report created by the Land Trust and another group to create an arboretum at the Cove. The 2000 report (emailed to all Committee members) also endorsed an arboretum concept.

Discussion followed in regard to reports conducted on the property in 1995 and 2000; listening to people who have interests in the property (hold a public hearing); recent vandalism at the site and properties that are maintained and kept nice tend to not be vandalized; people living on the property (removed, but have returned); January budget season (last budget established a line item - \$5,000; will need to determine how much will be required for ongoing maintenance – currently costs about \$400-\$500 per cut and needs

to cut further into the property; road needs to be made passable; Gail Reynolds has helped to identify the native species on the parcel; and Capital Budget – worked into the Committee's charge via linkages to other open spaces and the Center.

#### **A. Future Use (Including linkages to other open spaces and the Center)**

Mr. Warner stated this item ties in to the Capital Budget – line item for Higganum Center Connectivity Study (name changed from Higganum Center Sidewalks). This current year there is \$7,000 for a study which can be reprogrammed as enough studies have been conducted, and \$24,000 in future years for a capital project. Mr. Warner stated the Cove consists of 13 acres of land; however, the reality is there is less than two acres of land that is usable. Mr. Teran asked for clarification as to who owns the Cove. Mr. Warner stated the Town of Haddam. Discussion followed in regard to using the land as a town resource; the grand opening concert after the EPA had finished their remediation work; and some of the native species having been placed along the foundations (foundations should be a focal point) and no one's nurturing/maintaining the plantings.

#### **B. On-going Maintenance**

Mr. Warner reported that Lee Hunter has been doing a wonderful job mowing the property and will be coming back to do a final mowing for the season.

Mr. Schwing stated the idea for the oversight of the Cove was to be a joint effort by the Historical Society, the Town, and the Land Trust. Mr. Schwing stated signage was to have been installed explaining where the historical buildings were located and hopefully a pavilion in the flat area.

Mr. Baird stated he had sent former first selectman Melissa Schlag a sample of an old mill ruin by a river and near a waterfall in Canton, NY (where St. Lawrence University is located) – hiking trails with placards describing the history of the ruins and the mill, photos of when they were active, and further down on the river explaining the flora and fauna.

Mr. Teran stated all that has been discussed thus far for the Cove is wonderful, but can it be accomplished until a vision is created. Mr. Teran spoke in regard to little things taking place that will not be in service to the bigger objective. Mr. Teran also stated that once a vision is created and there's a metered timeline, everything will fall into place. Mr. Warner agreed that a vision is needed and the Committee has a great start with the 2000 study where it talks about the ruins, interpretive signs, and items incorporated into the PowerPoint. Mr. Warner stated when the Committee develops a plan and they go before the Board of Selectman (BOS) and Board of Finance (BOF) there's credibility.

Mr. Schwing spoke in regard to the Portland Quarries (the pavilion being a public area) and how former Senate Eileen Daily who help channel funding for the work. Mr. Schwing stated funding does not necessarily have to come from the town. Mr. Warner stated State Representative Christine Palm has asked if there are any projects in need of funding and he has put in for funding for a multi-use type trail from Saybrook Road to the Cove as well as a viewing platform/gazebo. Mr. Ursini asked if state funding is accepted, would the Cove become a state park with Mr. Warner responding no, but it will make it much hard for the town to say the property is for residents only. Discussion followed in regard to encouraging people to come to town to use the Cove and how to manage it in a way that will work for the town. Mr. Baird spoke in regard to Collinsville that is attracting bikers and hikers.

Discussion followed in regard to State Representative Palm being very supportive of the town. A brief discussion followed in regard to how the town can manage visitor without discouraging them from visiting.

Discussion followed at length in regard to drug use and sales on the property with Mr. McCane stating he will not take his children to the site to play any longer because of these activities.

Mr. Warner asked how often the site should be mowed. Mr. Warner stated he believes near the ruins the grass area should be similar to a lawn to encourage picnics, etc. The Committee asked if the pipe will be removed. Mr. Warner stated the pipe was connected to another drainage pipe.

Mr. Ursini asked if there is a vision to make the falls side of the Cove look better. Mr. Warner stated that's the purpose of the Committee. Mr. Ursini spoke in regard to the installation of wood chips to help cover over the broken glass and clean up the spot. Mr. Ursini stated the glass at the bottom of the hill is out of control and after every rain, more is exposed. Mr. Ursini asked if the town's vacuum truck could be used to assist in cleaning up the glass. Mr. Ursini also spoke in regard to a Source to Sea Clean Up taking place in September (a first step to clean up and make this a yearly project). Mr. Warner stated on the town's various Facebook pages there are people who are interested in helping out.

### **C. Desired Improvements**

Mr. Teran spoke in regard to a bench built and installed by a couple at the end of Cove Wharf Road.

Mrs. DeCarli spoke about Colin Lusi who helped clean up the area and built a platform; however, his work came to an end when a woman in the area complained to the town.

Mr. Ursini spoke in regard to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes along with parents working on the trails back in 1998.

In order to get engagement through the fifth graders or the Scouts, Mr. Teran suggested they build wooden bridges/walkways. Also discussed was the construction of a kayak launch – would need to dredge some of the waterway.

Mr. Ursini stated some type of platform or staging would need to go over the foundation or will it remain open. Mr. Warner asked if Mr. Ursini was referring to the deep pit (he was). Mr. Warner stated although the area is full of graffiti, from an historical aspect you do want to see in to it (the turbines) and would probably need to secure the area. Mr. Warner stated a good start would be to backfill the foundation and put some stone dust around them for a picnic area or some type of active space.

Mr. Teran asked 1) how does the Committee create the 2021-2022 mission with enough detail over a ten year period, and 2) does the Committee think they have enough of a broad perspective to be responsible (in other words, are there other people that should be on the Committee that are missing). Mr. Schwing stated specific people can be invited to assist as the Committee works on specific areas, review the report, and provide an opinion when the time comes. Discussed a five year vision with two year commitment (pick what Committee would like to accomplish and match it to available funding) and keep adjusting the vision as the Committee moves along and gets more input from the public. Mr. Teran stated perhaps there should be a long term vision, a five year plan, but a two year time and action plan (to coincide with the first selectman's term and what the powers to be will have the power to do). Mr. Warner stated municipalities work by getting the work done. Mr. Warner spoke in regard to the park beyond the Brownstone Quarries Water Park. Mr. Teran suggested inviting the people who developed that park to the next meeting. Mr. Schwing the project is here, it's a matter of putting the energy into it.

A brief discussion followed in regard to parking (whether or not to keep it all to the front or allow some further down) and keeping the site gated.

### **D. Rules and Regulations**

Mr. Baird stated he believes that one way to ensure things are being continually done at the Cove is to have the Committee and asked what kind of authority does the committee and/or the town have and how to enforce it. There may come a time where there will be the need for some enforcement.

## **E. Community Awareness and Promotion of the Unique Features of the Property**

Previously discussed under Item #2 and Item #2C.

## **F. Seek Public and Private Funding for Improvements to the Property**

Mr. Teran asked if the residents of Haddam, Tylerville, and Haddam Neck being willing to devote funding to the Cove. Mr. Warner stated funding has already been devoted to the Cove. Mr. Schwing again spoke in regard to the state noting that DEEP has invested greatly in the Cove. Mr. Warner stated the state also has a number of trails grants. Mrs. DeCarli spoke about the alewives that are still coming to the Cove and possible funding from fisheries.

Mr. Schwing asked if fencing will be needed noting there are some steep areas. Mr. Warner stated there is some existing fencing that's in disrepair and will need to be replaced.

## **G. Submit Annual budgetary Request to the First Selectman for Inclusion in the Annual Budget Process**

Mr. Warner stated if the Committee can come up with a real plan, he doesn't see a problem in getting additional funding.

## **3. Available Funding**

Mr. Warner stated there is currently is a line item in this year's budget for \$5,000 and a Capital Budget line item - \$24,000.

## **4. Open Discussion Regarding Next Steps**

Using his laptop, Mr. Baird showed the Committee kiosks that are set up in various towns along walking/biking trails.

Mr. Teran spoke in regard to a sign "Welcome to Higganum Cove" that at least puts a flag in the ground indicating that something is taking place. A brief discussion followed in regard to how to discourage the handful of disrespectful users of the Cove – active use of the property, speak to them directly, making it known that certain behaviors are not acceptable (disposal of garbage, drug use, vandalism, etc.), and contacting appropriate authorities (state police).

## **3. Adjournment**

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

Mr. Warner adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Bunny Hall Batzner*  
Bunny Hall Batzner  
Recording Clerk

**The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 14 October 2021.**