

Final Thoughts on the Proposed Rossi Property Sale

A few final thoughts and comments on the proposed purchase and sale agreement (P&S) for the Rossi property. Below are some of the objections I've heard to approving the P&S. Remember, approving the sale does not approve the developer's proposal nor does it change any zoning regulations.

- “It’s a hurried deal” – Not really. We have been working on this since we applied to the CT Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for a Brownfields Grant in September 2022. We applied for this competitive grant because we had success applying for a similar grant for the Scovil Hoe property (former DOT garage) the year before. DECD [awarded](#) us the grant in December 2022. The grant requires us to have a private party (developer) to improve the property after it is remediated. We issued a formal Request for Proposals seeking a developer to partner with us. The RFP was advertised for over a month. DECD had to approve the wording of the RFP, how it was advertised and for how long, and our selection of the developer. DECD approved the selection on April 26, 2023. Higganum Village, LLC was the only one to reply. This isn't surprising. Financing for brownfields development is difficult to get. We've been working with Higganum Village, LLC since to put together a proposal that met our needs for development and that was financially viable for the developer. What has been hurried was presenting the proposal to you. That is due to the unexpected, last-minute deadline DECD imposed to complete the process by March 31st. If you remember, when we went through the process on the Scovil Hoe property we had time to hold an open house on the site so you could see the buildings, see the drawings of the proposed development, talk to the developer, and talk to our environmental consultant in addition to an information session and town meeting. We didn't have time to do that with Rossi.
- “We don't need this grant, there's plenty of grant money out there” – The grant is for \$1.5 million. We must have a signed P&S with the developer to get it. This grant, like most, is a competitive grant. Not everyone who applies is awarded one. The chance of being successful in reapplying for the grant after we turned it down is negligible. However, the EPA also awards grants for brownfield remediations. Those are competitive and are generally targeted toward economically disadvantaged areas. I have no idea how successful our application would be. Our only recent experience with a direct federal grant was from US DOT. We were awarded that grant two years ago. I have yet to see a formal award letter or even official notification of how much we were awarded let alone any funding.
- “We can pay for it ourselves” – Yes, we can but think about the impact on your taxes. We have to complete the remediation by December 2030. That gives us six years to fund \$1.5 million remediation which equates to a 0.25 mill increase to the mill rate for each of those years. If we fund it over six years the property will sit contaminated for years before a shovel hits the ground. If we fund it in one year a \$1.5 million expenditure equates to a 1.5 mill increase in your taxes. Keep in mind we'll also be paying for millions of dollars of capital improvements by the school district at the same time.
- “We're giving the property away” – While brownfield sites can be remediated to allow safe use of the property, remediation doesn't mean all the hazardous substances have been

removed. Some must be removed; others may be left in place and capped, encapsulated or contained in some other way. The sites will always carry the taint of being contaminated.

- “We’re giving them a free acre on the HES property” – The original proposal was to sell the entire 4.8 acre Rossi property for \$250,000 plus a \$5 million investment in the property, the current proposal is to sell approximately 3 acres, which includes the piece on HES, for \$250,000 and a \$3 million investment. The developer is paying more per acre. (The investment is less because there aren’t as many buildings in the revised proposal.) Also, adding the piece from HES to the sale helps us. There’s a limit to how many gallons of septic are allowed on a piece of property regardless of the size of the property. The soil on the Rossi site isn’t suitable for a leach field; the leach field must be on the HES property. That would severely reduce the capacity of the community septic system at HES. If we adjust the property lines and add land to the Rossi property, we don’t reduce the capacity of the community septic system on HES.

The referendum is Tuesday, March 5th. Please get out and vote.