East Haddam Open Space Committee
Land Use Office

Special Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2022

1. Call to Order

The Special Meeting of the East Haddam Open Space Committee was called to order by Mr. Brady at 7:35 PM at the Municipal Office Complex.

2. Attendance

Members Present: Will Brady (HDC), Mary Augustiny (IWWC), Susan Kinsman (P&Z) Theresa Govert (BOS), Travis Goodie (REC) , Tracey Ginder Delventhal (BOE), Mary C. Colpoys (EHLT) – arrived 7:40, Harvey W. Thomas (BOF) – arrived 7:52
Members Absent: Thom Delventhal (CONS), Jessica Stone (EDC)
Also Present: James Ventres (Land Use Administrator)

3. Approval of Minutes

Change spelling of "Colpoys" under the motion to move into Executive Session.

A motion by Ms. Kinsman to accept the June minutes as amended. Seconded by Ms. Govert and unanimously approved.

4. Bills

No bills.

5. Discussion – Potential Open Space Parcel and Bond Authorization

Mr. Ventres noted there is no need to go into Executive Session during this meeting. He then reviewed the proposed parcel. It is a 95-acre parcel on North Moodus Road across from Grandview Campground. The Grandview Campground is called Grandview due to the agricultural fields and the wooded hillside across the way that has been that way for over 100 years. The appraisal came back at $479,000. The owners then discussed the appraisal, and they are happy with it. Mr. Ventres noted that DEEP wants a single yellow book appraisal and a peer review appraisal for checks and balances. He noted that this piece of property is south of the middle school and if there was a need for future use, this parcel helps with that future need. He provided per acre breakdown: 74 acres or 78% will be for open space with proposed municipal use at 22% or 21 acres.

Mr. Ventres outlined the costs for the property, which is outlined in the attachments to the minutes. He also provided the description and verbally reviewed it as well. Right now, the property is actively used as farmland, and the property owner is interested in the Town allowing the existing lease to remain in place with the neighbor.

Mr. Ventres outlined that this property would need to get onto the agenda for all the boards and commissions in August and September for discussion.

Mr. Ventres provided the specifics of the bond authorization related to how the original 2003 $5M bond authorization has been used. He provided an attachment that showed the breakdown of the bond usage, noting that there is enough money left in the existing bond to cover this new property purchase. Part of the information he provided shows that 4000+ acres have been protected since 1995. In addition, the handout showed how the 2003 $5M bond fund resulted in $18M in open space purchases given other organizations such as the East Haddam Land Trust, Nature Conservancy and the State of Connecticut that have contributed.

There are still properties that meet the Open Space Commission's criteria for future purchase. The Open Space Grant only covers the purchase price, so the additional items such as surveys are the Town's responsibility. He provided a copy of the 2003 referendum for the $5M bond, as well as the mailer the East Haddam Land Trust sent to all East Haddam residents in 2003. The Board of Finance will have this on the agenda for this upcoming Monday.

Mr. Thomas clarified the agenda items for the Board of Finance; there are 2: 1) to receive BOF approval to move ahead with this property purchase, and 2) to receive BOF endorsement to adjourn to a referendum to vote for a new bond authorization. Discussion ensued related to the actual amount to request for the next bond authorization. Ultimately, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance must make the recommendation on the bond amount.

Mr. Thomas also asked for the Commission's feedback on the referendum language. Mr. Ventres noted that the referendum must be updated and then sent to the Town Attorney for review. Mr. Thomas voted that the Plan of Conservation and Development calls for the preservation of 10,000 acres and currently the Town is at 27% of that goal.

A motion was made by Mr. Thomas that the Open Space Committee approach the Board of Finance and all other boards and commissions recommending the acquisition of the Kronberg property on North Moodus Road. Seconded by Ms. Ginder Delventhal and unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Mr. Thomas that the Open Space Committee approach the Board of Finance and other relevant boards and commissions that the recommendation that the Town move forward with a new bond authorization for the acquisition of open space in the amount of $5M. Seconded by Ms. Ginder Delventhal and unanimously approved.

6. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Kinsman to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Govert and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon A. Goyette
Recording Secretary