**East Haddam Open Space Committee**
**Land Use Office**

**Regular Meeting Minutes**
**September 25, 2023**

## 1. Call to Order

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

## 2. Attendance

**Members Present:** Harvey W. Thomas (BOF), Susan Kinsman (P&Z), Travis Goodie (REC), Theresa Govert (BOS), Andrew Compagno (EHLT)

**Members Absent:** Will Brady (HDC), Mary Augustiny (IWWC), Tracey Ginder Delventhal (BOE), Thom Delventhal (CONS), Jessica Stone (EDC)

**Also Present:** James Ventres (Land Use Administrator)

## 3. Approval of Minutes

3rd Paragraph under bond authorization: Change Mr. Harvey to Mr. Thomas.

***A motion by Ms. Kinsman to accept the June 6. 2023, minutes as amended. Seconded by Mr. Goodie and unanimously approved. Ms. Govert abstained.***

## 4. Bills

No bills.

## 5. Discussion - Scheduled for Open Space Bond Vote and the Kronberg Property

Mr. Ventres refreshed everyone's memory that there was a hope to have a vote in summer, but due to the budget not passing, it shifted the referendum topics to January. Ms. Govert noted that the Board of Selectmen feels that having a separate referendum would be cleaner. Ms. Govert noted that no official dates for January have been set yet.

Mr. Ventres noted that after the June meeting, there was a request to the Board of Selectmen to put in the referendum a new $5M bond. Mr. Thomas noted that the request has been made but the Board of Finance has not heard from the Board of Selectmen that the request has been approved.

Mr. Ventres explained that when the first bond request went to referendum, he thought he would be requesting more in 5 or 7 years. With the support of the State, The Nature Conservancy and the East Haddam Land Trust, it is now twenty years past that original bond authorization. Mr. Ventres stated that the Open Space Committee must provide the facts around the bond request. While January is

not the best month for a referendum, Mr. Ventres noted that there needs to be a strong grass roots movement to help get the word out about the vote.

Ms. Govert said that the first budget was in May, and the Board of Selectmen are aware that time is of the essence in terms of purchasing the Kronberg property.

The Kronberg property has been farmland for over 100 years and connects to the trails that the school already has and to the Bogan piece that the East Haddam Land Trust manages on the Moodus River. There have been complaints that the Open Space Committee has not focused on getting open space near neighborhoods but has been focused on the Eightmile River. In addition, the mountain biking trail at the Middle School is very popular, so this is a great purchase for open space.

Mr. Ventres said that the East Haddam Land Trust will support the referendum by creating mailers for town residents as they have done in the past.

Mr. Thomas stated that if this is going to be a combined referendum, we need to have a template for both the land acquisition which requires facts about open space and the bond authorization which requires education on what a yes vote gives the town. The prior bond request had a great rate of return and resulted in several large parcels being purchased. The acreage preserved has resulted in Getaway opening a Moodus facility, a disc golf course being installed and mountain biking clubs coming to East Haddam and Moodus regularly to enjoy the biking trails. Mr. Thomas added that it would be a good idea to get an interview in the East Haddam News about the bond and open space referendum ahead of time, the narratives can be put together in October and then added in the referendum date. Mr. Ventres will do a rough draft of the facts and attributes and send it on to the East Haddam Land Trust.

Ms. Govert asked if we had a map of the other properties, like East Haddam Fish and Game Club, that own large amounts of properties that could sell.

Mr. Thomas will go back and see if the Board of Finance has ever cast a vote on the bond authorization. Mr. Ventres noted that there has been an affirmative vote to move forward with the Kronberg property.

Mr. Thomas stated that the Open Space Committee will need to attend the Board of Finance meeting in either October or December to discuss the bond authorization. Mr. Goodie asked about the money that surrounding towns have as a bond authorization.

Mr. Ventres stated that the town of Glastonbury has requested $2 or $3M several times, but most towns do not have an active bond authorization.

Ms. Govert added that the town of Lyme has a very active and wealthy Land Trust that is highly engaged in land preservation in Lyme. She added that the town of East Haddam is on the forefront of land preservation across the state with the original bond authorization.

Mr. Thomas asked that if there is a hold-up for the bond authorization with the Board of Finance is the Bond Council wording, could Mr. Ventres provide the draft wording? Mr. Ventres can provide the draft wording to Mr. Thomas if needed.

Ms. Govert will keep the committee members informed as to the Board of Selectmen meeting updates on the referendum topic.

**6. Adjournment**

***A motion was made by Mr. Goodie to adjourn the meeting at 8:05pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kinsman and unanimously approved.***

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon A. Goyette
Recording Secretary