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CHRISTINE HALLORAN  
TOWN CLERK  
EASTON CT

**Town of Easton South Park Advisory Committee  
Special Meeting  
June 15, 2020**

**Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Meeting ID: 573 146 5822**

**Password: SPAC0615**

**Total attendees: 22**

1906 Call to order by John Cunningham

Committee members present: John Cunningham, Ross Ogden, Tara Sanft, Lisa Keane, Jeff Becker, Elliot Leonard, Andy Kachele, Dwight Senior, Bob Schrage

1. Review minutes from June 1, 2020 meeting, motion to approve minutes by T Sanft, second by R Ogden, comment by J Becker that ALT was contacted by CFE in February, as point of contact, this was discussed at the previous meeting. Vote was unanimous.

2. Public comment: none

3. Old business

A. Review and discuss June 1 meeting, no comments.

B. Committee reports on ongoing investigations

1. Solar farm, update by T Sanft and B Schrage. Contacted UI, they were referred to Green Skies, waiting to hear back. Sky View Ventures looked at Google map, and thinks property would hold about 2 megawatts at 25k/MW. A Kachele asks if these entities would own and operate the property outright? We are committed to buying output at Staples, B Schrage responds the power generated would be utilized in other municipal buildings in town but there are many unanswered questions at this time.

2. Ag application, J Becker discussed with Ag Commission last week and they will help with this.

3. Educational Nature Center, update by L Keane. A contact has been made at SHU with the head of biology. He states he has multiple field use interests, especially due to parcel being inland with a water source. This work could be in collaboration with the town's educational programs. J Cunningham asks if other institutes have been contacted. A Kachele recommends Yale School of Forestry, T Sanft will send a contact.

4. Do nothing, update by D Senior. Continues to feel town should keep as is, with exception of cleaning up. A Kachele recommends proposing a plan for the clean up, one that is sustainable. J Cunningham states project can be renamed, D Senior would like it changed to Preserve and Protect.

5. Residential plan, update by R Ogden. Looking at prior proposals via P&Z. He asks for an appraisal for the 12 acres, not included in ALT appraisal. Looking a one acre and three acres lots.

6. Commercial development, update by A Kachele. No large structure could be proposed due to height limit of 35 feet, due to fire department restrictions. Reached out to Kleban associates but have not heard back. R Ogden suggests an owner/operator scenario may be best option.

#### 4. New Business

A. Gina Blaze presents her history of the property; as it is the land she grew up on, see attachment. She shares what the New England Prayer Center does. She states the last appraisal was done around 10 years ago and would like another one done. The NEPC is still interested in purchasing the property and they would keep the property undeveloped. R Ogden asks if there is a proposal at this time, she replies not at this time, awaiting an appraisal for fair market value. J Cunningham clarifies that the committee is not a decision making body but an advisory group for the BOS. Including the Blaze's interest in the purchase of the property will be added to our list of investigations, R Ogden to do this. A Kachele asks if a new plan is developed by NEPC, would it keep aligned to current zoning restrictions, in order to avoid legal action? G Blaze responds that there are no plans for new construction. She wants the public to know more about what the NEPC does and feels there would be less opposition with that knowledge. J Cunningham requests that a funding plan to support the planned purchase should be included in proposal summary.

B. Discussion/action for clean-up day, proposed by J Becker. Per the lease, the town has access to the property other than the 1½-acre leased by the Blazes. Clean up should be environmentally sensitive to the river. A Kachele responds that this is not under the charge of this committee, but we can take it directly to the BOS. D Bindelglass comments that the removal of large structures would need to be done formally, by the town, due to large equipment needed. A volunteer opportunity could follow for small clean up.

C. J Cunningham reads a proposal from a town citizen that would like to remain anonymous. The proposal indicates that there is a need for affordable housing in Easton and this would add appeal to future Easton buyers, by adding to the Easton story. Age restricted not specified. J Becker concerned that the large volume could have negative effects on the river/trout. R Ogden likes the spirit of the comment but concerned that in order to be profitable for a developer, there would have to be many units. T Sanft also thanks the citizen for this recommendation. J Becker states that the town should not be in the business of residential real estate, in his opinion.

5. Public comment: Laura Modlin suggests L Keane talk with the Easton schools regarding an education center and also contact The Nature Conservancy, she can provide a contact.

Bill Kupinse, 5 Stones Throw Road, states concern for doing anything with the property that doesn't fit in with the bond wording. The BOS should take on the cleaning up of the property and recommends that if the Blazes are interested in purchasing, then a proposal should be made. And is it ok to have anything other than a residence there, as a rental?

D Bindelglass gives an update on the appraisal status; the town is finalizing a revised map to incorporate the appropriate set back from the river downstream, making the ALT parcel slightly larger. An appraisal will also be done on the entirety of the property. The appraisal will be shared as soon as available. ALT is paying the ecological surveyor and the town will reimburse. A Kachele asks for clarification of grant application deadlines, both appraisal and ecological study are due August 1.

6. Plan for next meeting, July 20, 2020. Please forward any agenda items. We will discuss public suggestions via email that are sent to SPAC, public outreach sent via Hello Easton, Easton Courier, the Patch and FB.

2041 Motion to adjourn by T Sanft, second by A Kachele, vote unanimous.

Zoom recording:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/vslyMO3-7jtIzJXG6U\\_IW\\_IHD6ncaaa8hnQd\\_Kdbzk1NDNJlhwxwU-5\\_D3gUHL](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/vslyMO3-7jtIzJXG6U_IW_IHD6ncaaa8hnQd_Kdbzk1NDNJlhwxwU-5_D3gUHL)

Password: 8b&@Y@6e

Minutes submitted on June 18 by Lisa Keane, SPAC Secretary

## Blaze letter to SPAC

As Directors of the New England Prayer Center we wanted to give you a brief overview. There is a history to everything ... and no one knows the history more than I do, because I grew up on the land. I grew up horseback riding and playing in the fields, swimming in the river and fishing. I grew up watching my Dad avail the land to hundreds and hundreds of Easton residents to enjoy picnics and outings.

There is no one that cares more about this land than we do. There is no one who wants to preserve the beauty of it more than we do, and as you already know there are many residents of Easton who want to see the preservation of this beautiful land.

The Town of Easton once granted NEPC an option to purchase the Property; that purchase was made impossible by a zoning dispute and an adverse court ruling against Easton's own zoning laws. There was significant money spent by the NEPC in the legal process, along with the money for extensions to the town of Easton over a six year period.

### **Our Mission:**

The NEPC provides a place for people to be refreshed and receive restoration and renewed hope. This allows people to take a deep breath from the trials of life and focus on inner healing and prayer. The NEPC offers conferences, seminars, weekend retreats and opportunities for personal prayer. Topics such as addressing depression, marriage and parenting, health, motivation, coaching, and spiritual growth are part of the educational training we provide. There are attachments on this email of some of the NEPC past events. The last event we held in December called "Heroes of Faith" our speaker was a former Easton resident, Donna Marie Berger.

NEPC seeks to serve as a resource and point of connection in support of ministries, churches, and lay members regardless of denominational affiliation. Jesus Christ is the center of our faith. We seek to achieve a greater good by serving the community and by fostering unity in the region through teaching, humanitarian efforts and missions programs.

We continue to pray for our nation, community, leaders, schools, churches, families, children and our town. We believe that God gives every human being unique talents and gifts. The NEPC seeks to nurture and promote artists of all types who can add to our lives and understanding through expression of their talents.

Our wider vision for the land is this:

- Walking Trails for Healing (Mental, Emotional and Physical)
- Horses for Handicapped
- The Grove Area for Retreats, Outings, and Community Gatherings - firepit/retreat/teaching area
- The Outdoor Prayer Chapel Overlooking the River - *design finished and donated.*
- Vegetable Gardens to support community needs
- Outdoor Gazebo for concerts
- Renovations for current House to accommodate/Healing/Counseling/Holistic Therapy Rooms
- The Design Barn for Creative Workshops
- The Giving Tree Prayer Room (most important)