

April 13, 2022

The Stonington Board of Selectmen held a special meeting on this date at the Stonington Police Department at 5:00 p.m. Present were First Selectman Danielle Chesebrough, Selectwoman June Strunk and Selectwoman Debbie Motycka Downie. Members of the public and press were present.

(1) Call to Order

Ms. Chesebrough called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

(2) Pledge of Allegiance

(3) Comments from the Public

None

(4) Approval of Minutes

- A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to approve the regular meeting minutes of March 23, 2022.
- A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to approve the special meeting minutes of April 1, 2022.

(5) Correspondence

- Ms. Chesebrough took in correspondence from Mr. Stathis Maousos in the form of an application for the Stonington Harbor Management Commission.
- Ms. Chesebrough took in correspondence from Ms. Susan McDormand and Ms. Nancy Houlihan in the form of an application for the Commission on Aging.
- Ms. Chesebrough took in correspondence from Mr. Dennis Unites in the form of an application for the Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience and Erosion Control Board.

(6) Appointment/Reappointment/Resignation

Reappointment – Economic Development Commission

A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to reappoint Donald Fiore as an alternate to the Economic Development Commission.

Reappointment – Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Commission

A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to reappoint Nicholas Salerno as an alternate to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Commission.

(7) Old Business

None

(8) New Business

Discussion – MOU between the Town of Stonington, Avalonia Land Conservancy and Trust for Public Land

Ms. Chesebrough gave a history of the project and an overview of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which included the following:

Situated in the northwest section of Stonington, the 232-acre property came on the market in the summer of 2020. Nested between several existing conservation areas, the land has been targeted as a priority by both local government and land trusts. Based on requests for assistance to find a way to conserve the land from Town of Stonington First Selectman, Avalonia Land Conservancy, Aquarion Water Company and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national non-profit conservation organization, worked to secure an option in late 2020 to purchase the property.

Since that time, TPL has been working on the many facets required to move forward with the purchase, including developing a funding strategy and working with partners on an outcome that puts the community and conservation at the center.

After nearly two years of efforts, TPL and partners have created a plan that would have Avalonia Land Conservancy (an accredited land trust) manage 130 acres for open space, and USFWS 102 acres as part of the Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge. Aquarion will also hold a conservation easement within the Avalonia portion, and helped provide funding toward this conservation effort. Trails traverse both properties, and both entities prioritize conservation and public access for residents and visitors alike.

In regards to the process around USFWS, it should be noted that they are governed by federal regulations regarding land ownership and management. After the appraisals were completed, USFWS conducted a pre-acquisition compatibility determination to determine appropriate future uses such as hunting, wildlife observation, photography, fishing, environmental education and interpretation. The USFWS is required by federal law (the Refuge Improvement Act) to consider these uses. The pre-acquisition compatibility determination offered a public comment period. The full process is outlined in the Great Thicket NWR Final Protection Plan / Environmental Assessment dated October 2016 with Alternative B approved in January 2017. In February 2022, the pre-acquisition compatibility determination was put out and comments were submitted. By April 15, 2022 USFWS should be publishing their compatibility determination, which outlines the final approved uses for the property and can be found at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/stewart-b-mckinney>.

The closing on this property will likely occur within the month.

Both Avalonia and USFWS have shared that they will soon begin working on establishing plans for how to create trails that protect habitats that are fragile, while allowing access to beautiful spots within the forest. The goal is to have trails and the parking area created by the end of 2022, potentially by Fall.

The MOU allows the Town of Stonington to enter into an agreement with Avalonia Land Conservancy and Trust for Public Land to confirm intentions with respect to the acquisition of the Property and the completion of the Copps Brook Project, which includes the Town's funding contribution in the amount of \$270,000 from the Open Space Fund.

A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to approve the First Selectman to sign the MOU between the Town of Stonington, Avalonia Land Conservancy and Trust for Public.

Award of Bid – On-Call Sidewalk Construction and Repair

Ms. Barbara McKrell, Director of Public Works, gave an overview of the bid award. She noted that they received two bids for on-call sidewalk construction and repair. The low bid was Garafalo and Saraceno Concrete Construction Contractors, LLC. This will be a three-year contract awarded based on unit prices for the on-call projects at approximately \$110,650.00 per year.

A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to award the bid for on-call sidewalk construction and repair to Garafalo & Saraceno Concrete Contractors LLC in the amount of \$110,650.00 per year for three years.

Resolution – Fair Housing

A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to approve the Fair Housing Resolution.

Request – Use of Town Dock

A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to approve the use of the Town Dock for the Blessing of the Fleet 5K Race on July 28, 2022 and Blessing of the Fleet event on July 31, 2022.

Request – Use of Parking Lots at 4th District Voting Hall/49 N. Stonington Road

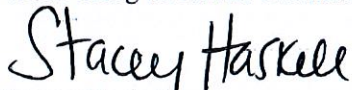
A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to approve the use of the parking lots at the 4th District Voting Hall and 49 N. Stonington Road for the Wood Boat Show from June 22-26, 2022.

(9) Comments from the Selectmen

- Ms. Downie gave an update on the Mystic River Boathouse Park project noting that a review of RFP's will be happening soon followed by interviews of qualified candidates. She noted that she has been working with Keith Brynes, Town Planner, to review the permitting process that will need to occur as a next step in regards to the project. A working meeting will be held to discuss master and site plans. In regards to the Beautification Committee, the Town has applied for a \$2,500 grant on their behalf toward the purchase of trees.
- Ms. Strunk stated that she was part of the Administrative Oversight Panel to review the Stonington Covid Response Grant submissions. She noted that it was a wonderful experience and that the panel approved providing \$62,000 in grants to help small businesses and non-profits within our community.
- Ms. Chesebrough stated that she would like to discuss two topics at a future meeting to include the potential reestablishment of an Affordable Housing Advisory Committee and a short-term rental plan that would need State of CT approval to change current regulations. Lastly, she noted that the application for congressionally directed spending requests are open and that she is working on applying for funding for the North Pier.

(10) Adjourn

There being no further business to come before this Board, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.



Stacey Haskell

Recording Secretary