

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

February 22, 2011

This is in response to the comments you submitted concerning the proposed transfer of the Seaside Regional Center.

As you are aware, the State is in the process of selling the former Seaside Regional Center (Seaside) which is located on Shore Road in Waterford and as such the Department of Public Works (DPW), in accordance with CGS 4b-47, placed the required public notice in the *Environmental Monitor* and the public was afforded the opportunity to comment upon the proposed transfer of this property.

No Identified State Reuse

In January 2008, the State solicited reuse proposals from State agencies for the Seaside property. One agency, the Department of Public Safety, did submit a reuse proposal to utilize a structure on the property; however, that request was denied by this office. The Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) comments indicate that DEP is currently working with DPW to transfer a Conservation and Public Recreation Easement on the subject property to the DEP. When the property is sold, the easement would assure public access to the entire waterfront portion of the site in perpetuity.

Determination of Current Market Value

To determine the current market value of the Seaside property, DPW obtained two (2) independent appraisals. The \$8 million purchase price exceeds the current market value for the property as established by these appraisals.

Town of Waterford's Establishment of the Seaside Preservation Zoning District

Since the State does not establish local zoning, the type and density of any future development on the property will be subject to the local zoning laws which have been established, and will be enforced, by the Town of Waterford.

Public Access, Open Space and Recreation

Prior to disposition of the property, the Conservation and Public Recreation Easement will ensure public access to Long Island Sound for passive recreation in perpetuity. The easement area will include the entire length of waterfront, all land within the 500-year flood zone, some adjacent upland area and access from Shore Road. Dedicated public parking and appropriate signage will be provided. The DEP will determine allowed and prohibited uses within the easement area as well as hours of operation.

In addition, the Seaside Preservation Zoning District, Section 17a.11 of the Town's zoning regulations states that *"All areas not approved for development as defined shall be set aside as permanent open space or recreation area in perpetuity to be held in common by the owners within the district."*

Connecticut Environmental Policy Act

After granting of the easement, the property is being conveyed in "as is condition." Therefore, the transaction is not considered to be a state action that would trigger the preparation of an Environmental Impact Evaluation pursuant to CEPA.

Natural Resource Inventory

The conservation easement area, which includes the entire waterfront and most of an existing watercourse, will protect any significant ecological resources on the property. The balance of the property is essentially developed, with lawns and buildings.

Site Plan Approvals

With regard to site plan approvals, Section 17a.12 of the Town zoning regulations states that "A site plan shall be submitted to the Commission in accordance with the provisions of Section 22 of these regulations and the purpose of this district, and no building or structure, parking lot, or outdoor use of land shall be used, constructed, enlarged, or moved until said site plan has been approved by the Commission. The development shall be constructed in accordance with these Regulations and the site plan as approved by the Commission. Changes to the approved plans may be made, the extent of which shall be set forth in the special permit."

In addition, as part of local planning and zoning approvals, the Coastal Site Plan Review requirements of sections 22a-105 through 22a-110 of the Connecticut Coastal Management Act would be applicable.

Development & Design

The design of any development of Seaside will be guided by Section 17a.13 of the Town zoning regulations which states "The architectural and site design of all buildings and improvements within the Seaside Preservation District, including typical floor plans and building elevations drawn to scale showing the exterior materials and treatment to be used, shall be submitted. The Plan submission shall specifically show how the development will result in the preservation and re-use of the Main Building, Employee Building I, the Duplex and the Superintendent's House, how the principal use is to be primarily located in these buildings and how all new construction will be integrated into a cohesive and unified development plan. The development shall be constructed in accordance with these design plans and the special permit shall specify the manner in which any changes to the design elements may be made."

Department of Public Works Request for Proposal (RFP) Process

The RFP for the sale of Seaside was conducted by the DPW and the disclosure of any information concerning the RFP process at this time shall be subject to applicable State law or regulation.

Council on Environmental Quality

Requests related to suggested actions which should be undertaken by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) should be sent directly to CEQ which can be reached at (860) 424-4000 or www.ct.gov/ceq

Subdivision of the Property

With regard to suggestions that the Seaside property be subdivided; it is the State's intent and desire to sell the Seaside property as a single parcel.

Harkness Memorial State Park

Comments concerning the operation of Harkness Memorial State Park should be directed to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). DEP can be reached at (860) 424-3000 or www.ct.gov/dep

Leasing of the Property

It is the intent and desire of the State to sell the Seaside property.

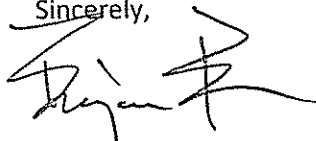
Public Informational Meetings

The disposition of the Seaside property is being conducted by the DPW in accordance with all applicable statutes, including Connecticut General Statute 4b-21 which does not include a public informational meeting requirement.

Alternative Proposals

With regard to suggestions for various alternative proposals; as the DPW's RFP process has concluded no alternative proposals are being solicited.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Barnes
Secretary

O'Brien, Patrick M.

From: george bray [gmbthree@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 10, 2010 2:00 PM
To: O'Brien, Patrick M.
Cc: Kathy Jacques; Robert Fromer
Subject: Comment on Seaside transfer

A former Connecticut, mainstream journalist who thirty-five years ago queried the late Gov. Ella T. Grasso during her inspection of Harkness Memorial Park regarding the shoreline access provided in Waterford by means of state shoreline holdings, I continue to be deeply concerned with the proposed sale of the defunct Seaside Regional Center property's impact on that public access.

As even a cursory examination of the facts on the ground make clear, state authorities appear to be complicit in a plan that would truncate that public access with yet further reduction in public access to the shoreline.

Indeed, it is a daily experience at Harkness to ponder the outrage of private access to a public holding at the same time that public access is denied by public authority.

Fee-payers to Harkness Memorial State Park are barred from access to the shoreline of the former Enders beachfront at the same time that fee-payers observe access to that shoreline by persons entering it from private access points. Standing before the barrier and no-trespass signage at Harkness while observing persons walking their dogs on the shoreline to which they are denied access adds up to discouraging example of state negligence with respect to its professed protection of seasonal bird-nesting sanctuary established by the state's Department of Environmental Protection.

With this "historical" abuse of shoreline access evidenced by unfetterd private access combined with officially instituted denial of public access, the proposed public-access amenities featured in the plan to sell Seaside for private use and development seems not as fortuitous a prospect as its proponents contend.

Speaking with authority no more significant than that of a resident and registered Connecticut voter, I would urge the Council on Environmental Quality to take note of the continuing dilemma of shoreline access between Seaside and Harkness as a vitally important opportunity for correcting a discrepancy between the public and private access to the shorelines of Seaside and Harkness holdings that this proposed transfer provides.

If public access to the former Enders beachfront is denied at the same time that private access to it continues, the state's positioning not only contributes to a glaring hypocrisy with respect to its shoreline holding, it marks as well reason to view the Seaside public-access concessions as far less than commendable upholding of environmental quality for public benefit. To wit: dog-walking on a beach ostensibly preserved for ornithological conservation seems a disreputable slap in the face to public access curtailed for this very same concession to environmental quality.

I urge, therefore, the Council on Environmental Quality to seize the opportunity of Seaside's transfer to private enterprise as relevant focus on environmental quality counseled by the contradictions of extant access issues confronting fee-paying public property users and those who daily access this same shoreline from private access.

I invite the Council's members and staff to visit Harkness and Seaside for an examination of the current realities regarding the shoreline between these jewels in our state's shoreline holdings. Surely a stroll on the beach between Seaside and Harkness, given that such a stroll has been for the almost five decades that I've been taking it, in line with federal and state dictates regarding "high-water mark" limitations, an amenity that the Council

might be well advised not to overlook in its deliberations regarding this highly controversial transfer.

If the environmental quality of the shoreline between, and including, the shoreline that stretches from Waterford's municipal beach to Seaside's western boundary is to be fairly protected by public authority, it would appear that the Council ought to at least address whether the former Enders beachfront should be closed to access both public and private, or the entire public shoreline stretching from Harkness to Seaside ought to be made available to all who might access it and experience it with equally applicable environmental constraints.

It is my hope that the Council will strive to bring to reality a irrefutably public access to a shoreline stroll between Seaside and Harkness, or a non-discriminatory policy that would bring to a close the flagrant abuse of environmentalism to effect a barrier between public and private access.

As a citizen, I beg the Council to clarify in its deliberations regarding the transfer of Seaside to private ownership whether public access is or might be, in this case, a means by which environmental quality is credited or discredited.

Indeed, a future Seaside to which public access is gained but from which access to the shoreline will effectively be denied would result in users of Seaside's access and Harkness's access looking at each other across an expanse of beachfront that, if not publicly accessible, remains the playground for those who access it privately.

My position should not be misconstrued as insensitive to the complexities at hand. It is my hope, however, that the Council on Environmental Quality will at least visit the question of opportunity for a more fully accomodated public access to the Seaside, Enders and Harkness shorelines or the unequivocal barring of public and private access to the seasonal sanctuary for nesting that Harkness operations have established as evidence of dubious public policy posing as stewardship of environmental quality.

Offering little more than a lay perspective, I nonetheless suggest that such a perspective remains the province of that overwhelming majority of those we collectively refer to as "the public."

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