

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD

**LAND USE COMMITTEE**

MEETING TRANSCRIPTION

JANUARY 11, 2023

Peter:

So its our regular meeting, January 11th at 5:30. We'll start with the safety moment.

Did everyone get their safety moment, and go through it? It kind of makes us think of winter, and you should be doing all of this, now, because like Mark said, we're not out of the woods yet. We got all this month. February and March can be nasty. So, have your vehicles maintained and your houses taken care of. Look at it and please follow it. I need approval of the minutes. So, the December 14th meeting.

Mike:

So moved.

Peter:

Second?

Bob:

Second, Bob Harvey.

Peter:

All in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Peter:

Opposed? Exemptions? Okay. All right. Environmental Education Update. Lisa, its all yours.

Lisa:

All right. Well, good evening, everybody. Thank you for having me tonight. I did talk to you back in April of 2021. So, this is just a quick little update of what's happened. I can't say pre-COVID or post-COVID, but in the midst of it. Let me start my screen share here.

All right. So, just to catch everybody up, I'm not sure if we still have the same RPB members as we did last time. If there's anyone new, the Whitney Water Center is in Hamden. We offer free hands on water science programs primarily for kindergarten through eighth grade students within our district. We primarily serve private and public schools and libraries, but we do also do homeschool organizations, girl and boy scout troops and libraries.

What we offer, outreach programs, where I go into the schools and teach a programs onsite where they can choose to come to the Whitney Water Center in Hamden. And our project water field trips, which is what the bus is for, that is targeted at middle school students. We do also offer loan boxes. They're self-

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

contained teaching kits. They're free of charge as well. Teachers can call and schedule them, and they're available for two weeks approximately at a shot. And the teachers can use them with their kids at their pace.

In-school programs are by far the most popular early elementary school programs. It's so much easier for the teachers, for me to come to them, instead of arranging transportation, getting a field trip, permission slip in all that sort of way. And project water is wildly popular with middle school. Again, it's a great free education opportunity that there isn't a lot of around.

Since the Whitney Water Center was began 32 years ago, we have served over 364,000 students, and within that total, 16,100 students have participated in Project Water. I have to say that is a number I am very proud of. When we started that program 22 years ago, Kate Powell and I never thought it would take off the way it did. And 50,000 students have used our water science loan boxes.

Okay. So, these numbers are for 2020-2021, the school year starting after the pandemic hit. New Haven, Hamden and East Haven were our primary user groups, and during that time period, we reached a total of 4,300 students. The towns we served did drop down. I did have a lot of teachers who normally participated in the programs that were not interested in remote programs, but on the opposite side of the coin, I had teachers who I never thought would be interested in doing remote programs, jump on board with that. But it definitely did narrow down our population.

Mark:

Is that how many students you served, was 13? What was that, the slide before this? Yeah. You served 1,374 students?

Lisa:

In New Haven. Yes.

Bob:

That's in New Haven. Yeah.

Lisa:

Hamden was 846. East Haven was 792. Those [inaudible 00:05:07]operated.

Mark:

Were those figures the same before the pandemic?

Lisa:

No. So, prior to the pandemic, those numbers would've been considerably higher. So-

Mark:

For New Haven, Hamden and East Haven, or for Haddam, West Haven, Branford and Derby and those other places? Guilford-

Lisa:

I think for all of them proportionally, it would've been an equal percentage higher.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Mark:

Okay.

Lisa:

We took about a 50% hit. I'm going to get into those details in a second.

Mark:

Okay.

Lisa:

So, the numbers that you just saw, that was in the full on pandemic remote, practically no in-person classes. Everything was remote learning.

These numbers were for last school year, which was hit or miss. Some schools still required remote learning. Others were allowing visitors in. Sometimes, it varied by the school, not even by the town. And we shifted a little. Hamden went to the top one with 2,300, almost 2,400 students. New Haven still went up in numbers, but they moved to second. And then, west Haven came in below them. But our numbers went from 4,300 up to 6,800. So, we had a nice 2,500 pop right there.

Okay. So here are the statistics. Looking at all of these statistics, I left out the 2019-2020 school year. Essentially, after March, nothing happened number wise, and that was just going to throw statistics. So, the pre-COVID school years are the three years prior to the pandemic. We averaged serving 5,000 students during that time period. To keep things clean, these numbers are all project water field trips and outreach and onsite classes. Summer programs are not in the mix, and loan boxes are not in the mix.

During COVID, we had a 48% drop and we reached 2,691 students. And this current school year, there's still plenty of the school year left. Teachers are still calling and booking, but booked to date were up 35% at 3,600 students. So, that's a nice rebound. The teachers that I reach out to, we, by no means, fell off their radar, but they're overwhelmed. So, I've been reaching out to the teachers and saying, "Hey, want us to come back into your classroom?" And it's always been a resounding yes, put me on your calendar.

Peter:

Lisa, excuse me. Peter Betkoski. If a school wants you, they reach out to you directly?

Lisa:

Correct.

Peter:

Okay. All right. And you could go give them a little preview of what you have to offer before they sign up. Is that how that works?

Lisa:

So I'll send them a copy of our education brochure, and that goes over all the education programs, outreach, loan boxes.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Peter:

Can I get a copy of that program?

Lisa:

Absolutely. I'll send it to Jennifer, and she can pass it along to you.

Peter:

Yeah. Very good. Thank you.

Mark:

I'd like a copy of that, too.

Peter:

You'll get it.

Lisa:

We'll send it to everybody. You got it.

Peter:

All right. Thank you so much.

Lisa:

Absolutely. Okay. That was our overall. Going to break it down into classroom programs. This is primarily me going into schools. Our pre-COVID average, the three years prior to COVID was 4,200 students. We dropped by 52% during COVID, and have come up 42% during this school year. I'm impressed with that rebound. I thought for sure it was going to take a little bit longer to get back up to speed with everyone just working in such a different environment.

And then, Project WATER was amazingly pretty much untouched by COVID. Three years prior to COVID, we were averaging 800 students participating in the field trip. During COVID, it only dropped 15%. We went down to 676 students. And this year, I would say we're back up to normal. I'd call a 3% deviation in numbers. That's typical for any given year. We were able to do COVID remotely.

So, I had a great remote setup. I was literally in the woods with my science equipment on Zoom. Kids are in the classroom, and I went to the three different stops. We did our water quality testing, and they were able to see where we were. I'd give them a little visual tour of the area, did the testing right in front of them. They could make their guesses, what was going to happen. We got to interact during it. I never ever would've thought during COVID in a situation like that, a hands-on field study would've been the program that didn't budge, number-wise.

Mark:

That's great.

Lisa:

I was so pleased and surprised all at the same time.

So, COVID brought a lot of amazing things to the education program. I had to take all the programs that we taught and turn them into a digital format that was easy for the kids to see, engaging and helping them learn. I took those improvements, and incorporated them into the in-person programs that I use in schools now. Because the smart boards were installed in pretty much every classroom, if it wasn't before, it was a big push during COVID, and even more important, is teachers know how to use them now.

There were plenty of times I walked in the classrooms prior to COVID, and the teachers like, "Well, there's the smart board. I can't tell you how to use it". And I didn't have a laptop before either. So, this was a perfect combination of portable digital materials and a easy way to display it when I was in the classroom. And the things that I had to change are just such a big visual improvement that really engages the students.

So, these two programs, Invasion of the Aliens, which is about invasive species and Macroinvertebrates, which talks about water quality, and how we can determine it by what lives in the water, account for 30% of the programs that I'm teaching this year. And both of these, shy of going through the whole presentation for you, had huge improvements in digital content. Big, bright pictures, easy to see, as opposed to like a laminated 11 by 17 that I would hold up and walk around the classroom with. Kids get to see real live pictures of the macroinvertebrates, which is always an eye-opener for them.

And then, another one, which is something I never thought would happen, one of our programs is called Oozing Oobleck, and we talk about liquids, solids and gases and properties of matter, and how liquids can change. And I start with a literacy connection, Bartholomew and the Oobleck by Dr. Seuss. Well, it's not easy holding up a book, so the kids can see it and turning pages and make an engaging. So, I turn the book that I narrated into a YouTube video, and it currently has over 29,000 views on YouTube, and it's been up for a year.

So, it has our logo on it through the whole thing. This has definitely permeated the elementary literary world and our logos right there with it.

Mark:

Good job.

Lisa:

Thank you. And Project Water also had the same digital improvements. I used to spend three class periods going into the classroom, teaching them background material, and learning how to use the test equipment before we went out into the field. Couldn't do that during COVID. So, I made videos, and now, we're using those videos. Teachers do them at their convenience. It's literally me teaching the class, saying, "All right. Pause the video. Pass out the equipment, and when you're ready, start it up again".

This makes it more consistent for what the kids are seeing, because I did have some teachers running the prep classes beforehand. My time is far more valuable in the field with the field experience, and the teachers are perfectly capable of doing the video-led programs. So, this makes it easier for the teachers, and it also helps me get into the field with more students.

And here's an example of a visual that improved. On your screen left is an old version of the directions. And after creating a video on how to do them, I just pulled stills off the video, and created a much easier to follow direction sheet. Kids like pictures. Kids don't want to read, so they can kind of pair the two up.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

And it just really helps them be more self-sufficient, and not have to ask, "Is this how we do it?" "Is this how we do it?" So, this has just been huge, huge improvement.

All right. Any questions? I'm going to stop my screen share.

Mark:

You know what they say, a picture's worth a thousand words.

Lisa:

Absolutely.

Mark:

Hey, you're the only person doing this program, right?

Lisa:

Correct.

Mark:

And you've been doing it for how long?

Lisa:

24 years.

Mark:

Well, I mean, you're an amazing person. You're like Wonder Woman of the Whitney Water.

Peter:

Yeah.

Mark:

But what happens if you leave, what's going to happen to the program? What I'm saying, and I've advocated this all the time, you need help. You need an assistant. You would get to more people, you would...

Lisa:

Yes.

Mark:

... get more things done. And you would be able to... although you've done this thing you do that they... It's like a meal you're making up, start here, go there, it's phenomenal. You're hitting more people, you're hitting more kids now. But what you need is help. And I think as a committee, we should advocate that you have more help, and so, this program could even expand even more.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

I've always advocated that you need help, and I hope that our fearless leader, Betkoski there, brings that up at the meetings at the higher echelon, and the guy in my left-hand corner here from the staff also advocates this, so that we can even get further help for you. This is a wonderful...

Lisa:

We're working towards that.

Mark:

... project, but you're only one person. You're only one-

Lisa:

Exactly.

Mark:

You can't do it. I mean, you've done a phenomenal job.

Peter:

In the last meeting, we brought this up, too. We did. We're trying to... But we got to be more advocate to help her out. You're right. This has been on the-

Mark:

She can [inaudible 00:16:30] to the summer programs with the PAL and all that, where they're going to the lakes and they're doing things now out there. I mean, she needs help. We need to have an department of this, headed by John.

John:

Hey, Mark. Definitely. I think the succession planning is a significant, I would say, part of, I would say the HR and we are focusing on many different, I would say, just like Lisa's role is very, very critical. I think across the organizations, there are many people who are, I would say, being here for 30 years, 34 years. I think it's an organization thing that we are attacking as a whole. And certainly, I think Lisa has been one of, I would say, the most strategic pillars of this Whitney Center. And just to kind of add, I think, last month, I think Brian had asked, I would say, an update. And based on that, we had actually brought Lisa to make this presentation.

So certainly, I think your point is well made. And it is, I would say, it is a point that is being made within the organization as well, because there is-

Mark:

It's going to be [inaudible 00:17:32] time, it's going to be budget time, and I hope that you put in something in the budget that this program gets expanded.

John:

Sure.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Mark:

And I hope, as a committee, we can get behind this and try to encourage you to put something in the budget to increase this. You're not talking a lot of money here. This is like minuscule compared to everything else.

John:

Absolutely.

Mark:

We got to get on the bandwagon because the kids are our future, and we have the opportunity, and we're the protectors of our land, and we should really share this with everybody.

Mike:

This is Mike [inaudible 00:18:06] from Seymour. Can you hear me?

Peter:

Yes.

Mike:

Okay. I believe in what Mark has said, and I am also moved about Lisa's knowledge and her program. And I agree with Mark that the water company should give her help and expand this program.

I'm going to speak to the Board of Education in Seymour about this, because I think this is really important, especially for our changing future. Thank you.

Peter:

Thanks, Mike.

Lisa:

In the last month, we did make an active move towards writing a job description involving a new educator with some other facets to it. Step's been taken. We'll see where it goes.

Peter:

You're correct, Lisa. This is one [inaudible 00:18:59] They are moving them [inaudible 00:19:04]

Mark:

This department and program should not have one person. It's ridiculous, and it has one person. You are like many people. There's no doubt about that, in my mind, after-

Lisa:

But I'm still one.

Mark:

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Yeah. But you're still one. You need help. We should be expanding this program, and I'd like to see it in the budget this time. Thank you.

Peter:

Thanks, Mark.

John:

Sure. Thanks, Mark.

Peter:

Any other questions for Lisa? Well, great presentation, Lisa. And obviously, I'm very impressed with the program. That's why I asked for a copy of the program to get to our local students in schools. And Mark's correct. We got to get you some help, but it's amazing what you do, and it's a blessing, we have these kind of programs for the inner cities and some of the rural areas. So, thanks again.

Lisa:

It's the only exposure some of these kids get to science, especially in the younger grades in the inner city. So, it's a really beneficial program.

Mark:

I just want to share one... Shared it a few times. When we had the fishing during the summertime of inner city program, one of the little girls said to her... Kate, on the camera, I don't know what they did, they interviewed her or something. She said, "This is the best day in my life," she caught a fish. Her life. She was like eight, 10 years old. That's what we should be shooting for. Thank you.

Lisa:

Agreed.

Peter:

Agree. Well, if there's no more questions for Lisa... DiFrancesco. Is that how you say it, Lisa? Your last name.

Lisa:

DiFrancesco.

Peter:

Okay.

Lisa:

You're correct. My family butchered it.

Peter:

Okay. All right. Well, I didn't want to be rude and not mention your last name.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Lisa:

I appreciate that.

Bob:

Thank you, Lisa.

Peter:

Thank you so much, Lisa. You could stay for the rest of the meeting, or you can go feed that big dog of yours.

Lisa:

I'm going to go feed the puppy, if everyone doesn't mind.

Peter:

Okay. Thanks so much.

Lisa:

Thank you for your time, everyone.

Peter:

All right.

Lisa:

Bye.

Mike:

You're, welcome. Bye.

Peter:

All right, everyone. That was great. That was great.

Mark:

That's very good.

Peter:

Yeah. John [inaudible 00:21:09], you're up, buddy.

John:

Yep. Can everyone hear me?

Bob:

Yes.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Mark:

Yes.

John:

Okay. Happy new year, everyone.

Peter:

Happy new year.

John:

For the month of December for the surface water supplies, we were at 80%. 2021, we were at 85. Historical average is 72%. So, even though we had a very dry summer, we're still ahead of the game, and we've been getting pretty much average rainfall once we've gotten into the fall. So, the month of December showed, one... I'm sorry. 4.55 inches of rain and the normal's just over four. So, we continue to fill up the reservoirs. And for the year, we're still down about three and a half inches of rain. But everything's going in the positive direction. We should be fine, and have everything full by the time we get to spring.

Land we need for the water we use program, we spoke to different property owners, and Prospect, Hamden and Cheshire looking at properties to acquire for the protection of the public water supply. In Cheshire, the former Ricky Property corresponding with town staff about the status of the OSWA grant. It's still to be done, they needed to do some of the punch list items before we get paid, and they get paid.

North Branford, Beech Tree and Poms Lane, Martha confirmed the assessor that the island parcel that is the one on the inside of the bend of Beech Tree and Poms Lane could be split administratively because, apparently, it was merged administratively. But we need to follow up about the other parcels, the two that we're looking to convey to the land trust.

Also, in the month of December, I filed the water main easement in map on the city land records in New Haven. Rental house information, Skiff Street. We have many tires dumped on the property in December. Some have been taken to the disposal facility by the end of the month. I can report that as of now, all the tires been removed from that property.

Additional calls and emails were placed to the assistant town attorney to address the condemnation matter that we're still waiting for a resolution for in order to get this last of the former rental houses onto the disposition track. The town attorney did reply to an email from Sunny, and then, I spoke to the appraiser who was working on the matter, and he expected to work on the appraisal in January. And I can say that I talked to him this morning as well.

Ives Street, I corresponded with the owner about work at the property. Work began by the end of the month, and the activity at the house prompted various reactions through emails and online, social media outlets, many of which had erroneous information. So, we've been trying to correct them and get their hysteria under control. For instance, one post on Facebook said that, how could the water authority be allowed to sell 65 acres to a developer, so that [inaudible 00:24:07] can put students in there. It's like none of that's correct. So you got to try to correct the people, and get the train back on the tracks.

At 1029 Johnson Road, we correspond with the owner about work on that property, and also, for the Great Hill Road house in Guilford. Forestry update. Everything that's in bold are new from the November report. So, the leaf screen thing at Killingworth at East Hampton is now up to 40% complete. The overstory removal and tornado salvage that's off of Downs Road in Hamden may be pushed to the summer due to ground conditions.

We were hoping that the logger could get in there during the winter, but right now, the ground's not really frozen enough to do that. It's kind of like in this limbo state, and allowing the machinery in there at this time on that particular ground, we thought would be detrimental to the conditions. So we may push to the summer for that when things are really dry and a bit harder.

And in Killingworth, North Chestnut Hill patch cuts were about 20% complete for that job. Other things that Casey's been working on in the last month, mark timber at Guilford 12 and 12A, that's the parcel, where [inaudible 00:25:26] is just above it, to do civil cultural treatments around the reservoir and lay out more of the harvest boundary, worked with operations to improve drainage along the access road.

We worked with a professional deer hunter to remove the deer that's within the Nathan's Pond Slash Wall. He has taken out at least one animal the last I heard, and cut tops and debris and dragging them into position to plug holes in the wall so that deer cannot regain any access inside of the Slash Wall.

We worked with a suspended wood cutter over in Guilford about a property dispute to resolve his permit suspension. We inspected a partially completed access road, which he cut on his own property to get to ours, and that's fine. At this point, Casey has looked at it and we've approved it. He's going to be able to get to our property without having to go through this contested area. So, we're going to reinstate his permit. If it hasn't been done already, it will be done shortly.

We work with the Killingworth tree warden to obtain permission to remove a tree obstructing truck access to a log landing. We also, for a contractor, removed overgrown evergreen, got a contractor to remove evergreens at the Gallar Christmas Tree Farm. Reached out to three wood cutters requesting removal of their old abandoned equipment from their respective wood.

I'll say this last bullet at the end, because I always like to leave a funny thing at the end. We'll talk about the coin collection before we complete the update. Recreation, I let an hour walk at Lake Bethany, had about 30 people. Josh did an invasive species identification walk at Lake Saltonstall with nine people. We started the process of hiring new recreation staff for... I'd put in 2024, it should be 2023 fishing season. The website link to get permits was broken. So, we talked to our ISD people and the vendor up in Vermont to get that all straightened out, which they did.

We cleared down trees and limbs from trails, Chamberlain, Wolf and Saltonstall. We gave a tour of recreation areas. This is Jeff and I gave the tour to two new customer service reps. This is something that we've been doing in the last couple of years so that we can have the reps be out there and understand what the recreation program is, what our land looks like. If they get a call, what's it likely to be. We bring them to Saltonstall, Chamberlain and Maltby because those are the most populated areas, popular areas for our recreation program. And that's been working out very well.

And we submitted a DPA recreation activity use application for the alternate route of the New England Trail in Guilford. I haven't heard anything back from that yet. So, at the end of December, we were at 4,851 permittees. Last time at this year, 5,655, which as I've been stating, throughout 2022 is just the coming off the COVID bubble. We're on the downslide, and still there, but we're still like 800, 900 permits higher than we were prior to COVID. So, that's a good thing.

Special activity permits. What Linda has given out in the last month includes stuff for the annual Christmas bird count and other things like Jeff Ward... I don't know if Brian's still sort of emeritus at the

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

ag station, but Jeff retired also, and he's emeritus, but he's still getting a permits to go out into the field and do work. So, he's in a semi-retirement state, I guess.

Mark:

Jeff is doing more stuff than me.

John:

Yeah. Yeah. I would want to do less also in retirement and I think his motor just doesn't stop. Other items, encroachments and agreements, for agricultural agreements, we had a contractor for the Matthew Street field in Prospect clear out the invasives and take down a couple large trees and move rocks for the tenant that we have hanged up field. We got... At least Bob saw one or two calls or social media posts about that as well.

Again, that we're going to allow Amazon to build in there or some odd statements. Some I think were tongue in cheek, but others I'm not quite so sure. For North Branford Forest Road, we sent letters to [inaudible 00:29:43] about encroachments after remarking the boundary there. Trespassing issues in the last month. We recorded instances of trespassing including hunters, ATVs, hikers with dogs and hikers in unpermitted areas. And we also filed a... Or I'm sorry, we didn't file low pressure agreement. We released a low pressure agreement for a property owner at 543 Plains Road in Milford.

Kevin was involved in that also. Invasive plants. We treated... Josh, treated and documented invasive plant populations in North Branford, Bethany, East Haven, Branford, and Prospect, and totaled 644 acres to be mapped and 10 acres that were addressed in the field. The deer hunt, Nicole had about half of the posts and surveys come in already. I know she's had a big slug. She was out last week with COVID, so she's been catching up with the stuff that she couldn't do in the office.

East Haven Beach Avenue Water Main, the town council approved a resolution to convey an easement across the town property between Morgan Avenue and Beach Avenue for the new water main serving the cottages along Beach Avenue. So we were pleased that that all went well. Hamden, 364 Putnam Avenue. This is a butter of ours that has its apartments. I think there's about 10 units or so. We correspond with the manager of the abutting property since the retaining wall was failing and needs to be replaced. We sent a draft license agreement to them to review, in that way, we would allow them to come on to our property to fix the retaining wall.

The retaining wall's all on their property, but it's like impossible to work on it without being on our property. So, we're going to allow that. Walden Street, we got a... In Hamden, we got a request from an abutter to put a sign on our fence regarding their business. We said no. At Higganum Road in Durham, we fielded a complaint from a property owner downstream that the town was releasing water from a beaver clogged... [inaudible 00:31:46] and that create... And causing erosion. So we're still in contact with the town officials about that, because we don't want big slugs of water causing sedimentation and erosion.

Boundaries. In the month of December, we cleared and remarked a couple of miles of boundaries in Guilford, and we assisted with the pathway garden at Sargent Drive, and Josh performed drone flights for other departments, specifically engineering at the Derby tank site. I used the wrong site there, and the DAF project at West River Water Treatment Plant. There's a couple of articles you'd read this month, and I will now open the floor to any questions that you have.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Bob:

John, are you going to wait after the questions to finish with the...

John:

Oh, yeah, yeah. The last thing. So, what happened, Casey is putting a commercial firewood cutter over at Dudley Pond. So, he was in there, checking out the lay of the land, marking some of the trees and was going to meet with the contractor when he happened upon a small tote that held a coin collection in it. It was filled with pennies. It was also filled with rainwater, so, it was approximately a million pounds.

And he brought it in to the office, and I looked through it. I couldn't believe what he was saying. I have a picture of it. Hold on. Can I share my screen? Am I okay to share now?

Jennifer :

Yep, you're good.

John:

All right. This is it. You see that on your screen?

Mark:

Yes.

John:

So, he found this sitting in the woods and brought it in and we took a look at it. It was all pennies and nothing that was incredibly rare or valuable, but it was definitely someone's coin collection. And then, even Otter, I help out my other colleagues, Tom Kelly in the Lakes department, operations division, helped him with a Christmas count in Guilford.

And on that Christmas count was myself, Tom, Alex came, Will Henley was there, and also, Josh, Tracy was there and we were eating lunch, and the topic of this thing came up, and I said, "Yeah. Casey just recently found this coin collection in the woods at Dudley Pond". And then, Alex says, "Oh, I know where that was". So I was like, "Well, why don't you tell someone?" He was like, "Well, I thought it was just the neighbor's, so I just left it there, and then, there it was". I was like, okay.

So apparently, Alex at least knew that it was there for a long time, or at least for some time, but I did not. And it was interesting find, that what I said to Casey, you never know what you're going to find in the woods. Although I found some pretty weird things myself, that one tops the list, I think, at this point.

Joe:

John, that was off of Summer Hill Road?

John:

Off of Summer Hill Road, correct.

Joe:

Yeah. So, at the other end of that is where the little dam is that was fixed some years ago at the pond.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

John:

Yeah.

Joe:

Okay.

John:

I don't know... I mean, the Dudley Pond parcel is fairly big. I mean, off the top of my head, I'm going to say it's like maybe 60 or 70 acres. I don't know where on the property he found it. I don't think it was that deep, but I don't know, for sure. Only two people know. One is Casey and the other apparently is Alex.

Peter:

So, he turned it into the police and [inaudible 00:35:37] water authority.

Joe:

I think there was a house in there years ago, I think near that.

John:

Yes, Joe. So, that... What Joe's talking about is if go into the back of the Dudley Pond property, there was a road that went around the pond, and then, it went up the hill, and there was a, used to be a house that was on top of the hill. And although the house is long gone, either burned, probably, burned down because there's nothing left, except for the chimney. The chimney is still there in its entirety.

So, if you look on aerial photographs and look to the west, northwest of Dudley Pond, zoom in, you can still see the chimney there sitting in the woods.

Mark:

Joe, was that your penny? Did you plant those there a long time ago?

Joe:

I don't think so. Not those. They didn't find mine yet.

Peter:

Joe got bags of money.

Mark:

Joe, we got go to your backyard with a metal detector or what?

Joe:

I don't know. I'm not talking.

Bob:

There you go.

Peter:

Any other questions for John?

Mark:

I do.

Greg:

Hey, John.

John:

Go ahead, Greg.

Greg:

It's Greg. Skiff Street property, you said people using it as a dump now?

John:

Yes.

Greg:

Is that new, or was that happening all along?

John:

No, that's new. So, what's happened is that somebody in that central part of Hamden has become a serial tire dumper. We know that there was a huge pile of tires dumped across the street from us at the old IHOP property. And then, there was one or... they came to our property either once or twice, probably twice because it looked like it was two piles and they went... Or behind the property, dumped them behind the house, so that you wouldn't be able to see them from the street necessarily. And then, they left.

Once we got rid of all the tires, then, we put a big log in the driveway, so nobody can drive back there without moving the log at least. And it's a huge log. It's like three feet in diameter. And then, we just heard... I think it was last week, that there was another pile of tires found at the KinderCare, which is on Dixwell Avenue, which is only a block or two down from town hall.

And so, I saw... There was an email between town staff about what to do, this is very close to water company property? Should they get it? We don't want it go in the river. It's like, no, no, no, this is not on our property. We're not going to be disposing those tires too. It already cost us thousands of dollars to get rid of the ones that were dumped on our property. But what should happen is that the Hamden police should be looking for who is doing this all around the center of Hamden.

Obviously, this is... It's like the same stuff has happened multiple times within a short radius. So, we were the victims, at least, once, if not twice, but it should not happen again, because the log is preventing access to the back of the property.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Greg:

Well that's good.

Mark:

Guy saved a lot of money. John, what's going on with our police force?

John:

I know Paul is looking to hire. He's gotten several applications in. At this point, I believe he is sending some of the candidates out to testing. That's the first step. Because they all have to take, like when you go to a new department, you got to take this, I guess, it's a standardized test as a law enforcement officer. That's the first step. And I think that happens... If it doesn't happen in January, it's going to happen in February. It's pretty close is what I understand.

Mark:

So, do you think we'll have members of the police department by June?

John:

I wouldn't want to make that prediction because I don't know the intricacies and the complexities of hiring law enforcement. I mean, I would say fingers crossed-

Mark:

This is third and fourth hand, and I heard that some of the problem with the hiring police departments is that... What's his name? Paul, he's the captain. What's his name?

John:

Yes, Paul.

Mark:

Paul. What's his last name?

John:

Ruggiero.

Mark:

It's not completely like in the blue uniform regime. I'm just putting that out, and the people... That's why we're not getting the applications that we should be getting.

John:

No. Paul's very much [inaudible 00:40:00].

Sunny:

Hey Mark, it's me.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

John:

And also, we have gotten many applications in, so...

Mark:

Maybe that was just a rumor. I don't know. I'm just bringing it up. It's probably a rumor. What do I know?

Sunny:

Mark, let me just elaborate a little bit there. Right? So I did speak to Paul this morning just to get an update. I think what John said was pretty much, I would say, the way forward. There are multiple applicants that have actually thrown their hat into the ring. And the next step for Paul is to schedule this... I think there is something called a South Central Criminal Justice Administration which conduct these tests.

And once these guys, I think, all the candidates go through this testing, depending on how many candidates pass this test, then, the second round of, I would say interviews gets conducted based on the candidates who pass this test. So, it's scheduled, I would say sometime around, I would say, I think they have given the time because I think they run a pretty, I would say tight schedule. So, based on their timings, they've given us some time around, I would say-

Mark:

There's no problem with applicants then?

Sunny:

No. The applicants have been... yeah. There has been more than I would say a dozen applicants, for sure. And I think the testing should be done in Feb. And after that, once, I would say, the results come in, the next will be the interview panel which will conduct the interviews. And then, from that, I would say panel, the recommended applicants will go through the final stages.

So hopefully, in all probability, to answer your question, we are optimistic that, at least, if not all of I would say the sanction, they would say whatever it's there, we should be able to fill some slots for sure. That's the goal. Yeah.

Mark:

Okay.

Peter:

Sunny, Peter here. Who's involved in the hiring? Is it just human resource? Is it RWA? Does Larry-

Sunny:

Yeah. It's going to be... I would say primarily, I mean, human resources does all the initial, I would say, screening of candidates, and Paul, normally, I would say in this case, Paul being the hiring manager would typically go through and vet the candidates, and then, select the people who have the right experience to run through the admin, the testing, whatever that needs to be done.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

After that, I think there'll be a panel. Typically, for all positions, there is a panel of, I would say, interviewers who interview any candidate. So, it could be three, four, depending on, I would say, one from HR. I would say Paul would be the other person. Then, two other people, and maybe I would say depends on the type of position, the leadership team members can get involved. So it's actually a panel that does conduct the interview. And based on the feedback, the HR and the hiring manager sit, and then, finalize the people who should be, then the background checks happen. So that's how it goes.

So it'll be a panel, Pete. It's not generally one person doing it. It's pretty much... I mean, pretty similar for even I would say entry level positions all the way I would say to the leadership and VPs and directors and all that. So it's a pretty standard process. HR does the initial, I would say, recruitment posting and calls for candidates. And after that, I would say the hiring manager and the HR director takes it up.

Peter:

Is Linda still there?

Sunny:

Very much. Very much.

Peter:

Okay.

Sunny:

She does work for the engineering and environmental services, so, she is our main go-to person, actually.

Peter:

And Paul Ruggiero, right? That's the captain's name?

Sunny:

Correct.

Peter:

He was with us, and then, he left, and then, he come back. Is that true?

Sunny:

No.

Peter:

No. He's been with us?

John:

Yes. He's been with us for 20 years, I would guess, something like that.

Peter:

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Okay. That's what I needed to know because people... in all fairness to Mark, I heard the same thing. But who am I? I'm leaving it up to...

Mark:

John, I thought he took a job at Uconn and then, came back.

John:

No. You're thinking of Sal.

Mark:

Who?

John:

You're thinking of Sal Nesci.

Mark:

Okay.

John:

So, Sal came in and when Peter... Not Peter. When Paul Shilling left, that's when they brought in Sal. And Sal was the head of the police department at that time. Then, Sal left to go to Yukon for a period, and then, came back. But when he came back, he was not an officer for us. He was in some other capacity. But he then left shortly thereafter.

Now, this is around COVID, so it's hard for me to remember timing, because you didn't see anybody, people, as regularly as you used to. He is now on the police force for Guilford. That was Sal, not Paul.

Peter:

Okay. I guess we got-

Mark:

I'm looking that up.

Peter:

We got human resource, regional water oversee, and they got different standards, just go around. Do they not? I mean, for the qualifications, I mean I think it's a little more higher, or is it just because they're police officers?

Sunny:

I think, in this case, the testing seems to be, I would say an additional one that needs to be done for police officers. Pete, I think that's exactly why there's only one testing agency from what I understand, at least within Connecticut, which does this, or maybe at least this portion of the geography.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

So, I think that is an extra process that typically these candidates go through. The rest of the candidates don't have that kind of a testing.

Peter:

Okay.

Mark:

We don't want to hire the guy in Waterbury who just got fired for yelling at that. Did you ever hear... Anybody see the tape on that?

Peter:

Oh, yes.

John:

Yes.

Sunny:

I haven't.

Mark:

Don't want to hire somebody like that. Bob would like it.

Peter:

That's a whole other issue, Mark. We got to have a little faith in management there. So, any other questions for John? I guess great report as usual, John. You do a great job also. Thanks so much.

John:

Thank you.

Jamie:

Peter, if I may.

Peter:

Yeah.

Jamie:

I don't have a question for John. I just wanted to say thank you John, over and above Monday night at our board of selectman meeting, we had a couple of folks make comments about the cutting taking place at North Chestnut Hill Road and I texted John. He unfortunately gave me a cell phone number and I texted him on the spot. And within minutes, he gave me some feedback, and then, followed up with details. So I was able to get back to our building inspector who was the one who was raising questions, and suggesting that there was going to be a big uproar in town, and was sort of creating the uproar, I think, about the cutting.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

And so, I appreciate John over and above working late at night and responding, but it helped me in our town relay information and represent the water authority in a better light in terms of the information that was provided. So, I really appreciate you doing that, and I thank you for taking time out of your home life to meet Arne. So, thank you very much.

John:

Not a problem.

Peter:

Thanks, Jamie.

Bob:

John... Can I ask?

Peter:

Go ahead, Bob.

Bob:

What type of property are the wood cutters abandoning on our property?

John:

Wood cutters abandoning, what do you mean?

Bob:

That was one of the things. You had some wood cutters that were abandoning some property.

John:

Oh, oh, yes. Sorry.

Bob:

Personal property.

John:

It was like equipment, is what I mean. The one that I'm most familiar, there was a commercial firewood cutter who was in the Pine Hill area over by Peat Swamp in Seymour. And we had issues with him. Eventually, we kicked him out. But he left a skidder in there, and it's been there for a couple of years and he never took it out. So, Casey was chasing after him. I know Alex chased after him. Never took it out. Eventually, Casey chased after him and got him to remove them from the property. That's what we mean by wood cutter's property being abandoned on our property. I think another one was like someone left a log splitter somewhere up in North Branford, I believe it was. Things like that.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Bob:

Okay.

Peter:

I'm surprised, Mark, you're not commenting on that. Mark will probably grab it and sell it. No comment, Mark?

Mark:

Anytime there's left equipment here, just let me know.

Peter:

Yeah.

John:

I'll keep you in the loop.

Peter:

It's nothing like stirring the pot. Sorry, gang. I couldn't resist. Any other line items? Sunny, management. Anyone else from management want to speak?

Sunny:

Yeah. Just, I would say to give an update on this typical... I think in the last past, I would say a few that the inner city kids, I think Paul has been working with his counterparts at the New Haven City Police, the athletic leagues. I believe Jeff is also involved from John Stee who runs the recreation program. There, we are hoping to get the list of, I would say, the number of, I would say students who are going to be participating, plus the dates and times they have to get back.

So, there is an active follow up on it. So hopefully, that should happen this summer, the one that we were talking about, bringing the inner city kids to the rec areas. I think that is an ongoing activity. Just wanted to give that update.

Mark:

I think that this shows that you need to set up a person in charge of this. Paul's doing it this way, John's doing it this way. Somebody who's going to bring in recreation, whether that woman from the Whitney Water Center or whatever. But you needed like a department for that under John or under Paul or both of them on a committee. So that... I mean, John has things to do, Paul has things to do, and you should all be overseeing them, but I think you need a person to coordinate all this. That's what I just would like to say.

Sunny:

Yeah. Definitely, I think point well take, and I would say, Mark, we will certainly look into it. Yeah.

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Mike:

Peter, I would like to add this. This is Mike from Seymour. In the last two or three weeks, there have been three water main breaks in the town of Seymour. And the water company has responded to a request by our first selectman, Ann Marie Drugonis, and set up a meeting to educate her about this.

But those three water main breaks, after I investigated it, were all on Aquarion water mains. None were part of our water system. And the meeting that we're going to have, I am certain we're going to educate our first selectmen about that. And I'm very proud of the fact that none of the water mains were of our company. Thank you. Thanks. Thank you Mike. Thank you.

Peter:

Yeah, and in fairness to that, Mike, I don't know if you heard me before, regional water did help on some of those repairs in Seymour. It's an infrastructure issue in Seymour, but I can't speak for Aquarion.

Sunny:

Yes.

Peter:

Yeah. It only takes money to replace it all. Any other questions before I start wrapping up? Anyone from management here that wants to speak? Any other departments? I see a couple here. All right-

Peter:

Now, listen. All right. Members to attend the January 26th. That would be you, Greg, Mark. You got that? You got us covered, Greg. Did he leave?

Jennifer :

He might have left.

Peter:

All right. Well, Jen, you will remind him, correct?

Jennifer :

I'll remind him.

Peter:

Okay. Our next regular meeting's February 8th at 5:30. And now, I need a motion to adjourn.

Mark:

Move to adjourn.

Peter:

All right. Second?

Representative Policy Board  
Land Use Committee  
January 11, 2023

Bob:

Second.

Peter:

All in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Peter:

Have a great night. Thanks for a nice meeting.