

Dear Mr. Gerrish,

Thank you for the volunteer time you and your Committee give to this important issue. My gratitude also for providing the public with an opportunity to offer comment. As I am not able to attend the meeting on Wednesday, I offer my thoughts below.

Certainly what we already know is that the strengths of our Town are many. If asked why anyone might choose to locate here, a typical answer cites the Town's character as a beautiful rural, cultural, historic, outdoor recreation-rich environment in which to live and raise a family. For our visiting public, assets such as Goodspeed, Gillette Castle and Devil's Hopyard have established our Town as a renowned tourist destination. Chief among the Town's assets, the Village center is a particular prize. Not only is its location uniquely scenic, but it has a built-in visiting public defined by interest in theater, fine dining, and the experience of spending a few hours in a small riverside New England Town. For the retail sector, this is a plum audience!

The East Haddam Village is a retail business's dream location, ideal for the establishment of a premier shopping center, one perhaps modeled after that of Chester Village, or Essex or Watch Hill, R.I. A walkable downtown with boutiques and cafes offers an extraordinary opportunity to the Town to build upon an already well-established tourist base.

I am concerned, however, that anchoring the Village Center with a brewery would become a defining feature of the downtown area. This would be at cross-purposes with the character of the Village. In addition, a brewery would occupy essential retail space, limiting the area available to other retail businesses. Our ability to develop a destination shopping location is an important factor in attracting retail businesses. I believe the charm and personality of East Haddam's Village, a center that has drawn so many to our Town from around the state and beyond, would be greatly enhanced by the presence of a quality, tastefully created retail shopping and dining experience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Starr and Phil Sayres
6 Palmer Martin Road
East Haddam, CT 06423
(860) 873-9881

Dear Chairman Gerrish:

It is intriguing that someone from a world-renowned company like Centerbrook architects would be interested in the East Haddam property. Since the 1970's I have been a frequent visitor to Watch Hill, so I saw the deterioration of Ocean House up close for many years. Now it is a gorgeous replication of the original building which draws very high end guests. Why is no one thinking of condominiums for part of the property? Perhaps Mr. Riley could ask Mr. Royce, the owner of Ocean House, if Captain Kirk could bring Aphrodite up to the East Haddam dock on a regular basis, which would bring any lovers of fabulous historic boats to town.

My thoughts in reference to a "beer hall crowd" is that I think these days it is not what those words may have meant years ago, since I have seen people who are frequenting the new brewery in Chester. Someone recently remarked that the whole brew house idea may have peaked--perhaps that is not true.

Another restaurant? Are the two already in the village doing to well that we can support a third? How is business when Goodspeed is closed for most of three months?

Thinking of the possibilities for an inn, someone should find out why the two inns in town and one in Haddam are currently on the market. I hope it is not because they are not making enough money to stay in business. Maybe an inn with views of the Goodspeed and the Gelston House and the river which would be designed by Mr. Riley would be special enough to draw enough people to make it a viable commercial venture.

Just some quick thoughts from someone who has lived here since 1975 who cares a lot about what happens to a very important, very visible part of our town.

I'd recommend that the committee think about the out of town person or family that comes into town for the first time. As they cross the bridge into town, what would they see first if you give this property to the Goodspeed?

- Goodspeed parking only, others will be towed at owner expense!
- NO PARKING
- No parking without permit!

This is a mistake that I see all the time while on vacation and most of the time I just keep driving.

Please think about what type of businesses will get people to park and stay for a while.

- Steady Habit Brewery. It's clear the other businesses don't want them to move into the area because they don't want to compete, but we're talking about increasing tourism now, not keeping things the way they are.
- Additional restaurants: the same tired business have no reason to do better and offer more when they don't have competition. The food at the beer garden and La Vita is all out of towners have to judge the landing area by, this explains a lot.
- Swing bridge Spirits is supposed to be moving up the hill, will a replacement move back in?

What do we all look for while on vacation?

- Casual shopping
- Winery's/brewery's
- Antiques
- Casual food
- Available parking
- Sidewalks that lead someplace, people still like to stroll

Thank you for this opportunity and good luck.

Patrick Murray
Moodus

--
Patrick W. Murray
Protective Services Operational Manager

Middlesex Hospital

capatilizing on the commercial value of the town property is important to future income streams for the town. the biggest concerns i have are traffic,both vehicles and pedestrian,the traffic thru the center already backsup with the bridge opening or any big activtyies.any high volume business is going to add to this mess.acomadtions must be made for public safty and future business growth.

sincerly
glenn guggenheim

Greetings! I believe the land from the former town offices buildings should be sold to a developer with the stipulations that it would be developed according to the charm of our small town.

The income can then be invested in our Meals on Wheels for seniors, summer school for the elementary students, open space preservation, etc. Let's turn this around and create a positive income for our town, not more building expenses! This project should not become yet another tax burden on the residents! We have new schools, an extensive office building, firehouse and elementary upgrades, village lighting, and a barely used community garden. Also included are so many other projects without the means to afford it, besides tapping the life line out of the tax payer more.

It is astounding the number of volunteers that support our town such as; parents in the classrooms, fire and ambulance volunteers, community clean ups and too many more to list. Yet our taxes continually skyrocket without having those additional salaries to pay. Many thanks to the volunteers that help the town's budget by giving their time without receiving a paycheck for their services!

Many families simply can not afford these high cost in our small towns on top of the debilitating state taxes which are pushing potential tax payers to other states. We can make a choice to stop the excessive spending in East Haddam and sell this land while earning revenue.

Every family has a "project," a much needed new car to buy, medical cost, or children in need of braces or college and more. However, as a family, the reality is that we must put these expenses off because we can not afford it. The administration of East Haddam needs to assess the "wants" of the town verses the "needs" of its people. We do not "need" another expensive project coming from our scarce wallets. Please sell the land for profit and make East Haddam truly a welcoming place for tourism, not more financial drainage from its tax payers. Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,
The McPherson family

Please forward to the appropriate parties of the committee.

First thank you to the members of the committee that have and continue to put the time into transitioning this property. Based on the feedback from last night's meeting it was heard loud and clear that this is an important property and should be developed so it fits aesthetically, is economically viable and successful.

I will keep this brief, but many of my feelings toward how the property should be developed are echoing comments heard from last night.

1. This is an important and prime property at the entrance to our town. It currently provides parking to business', restaurants, etc in the area and I would like to see some form of acceptable parking accommodations remain.

We have an opportunity to possibly wide RT 82 in that area, soften the corners and increase visibility for drivers, pedestrians and people trying to navigate coming in and out of the parking lot. Maybe we keep some portions of this property to improve the corner, provide parking and maybe some space along the water for public use.

2. I don't think the town should lease the property. I know some people fear that the town loses control, however we do have planning and zoning commissions that can ensure new business', structures etc. meet the requirements that fit the area. I would like to see an RFP and approval process that gets our point across so proposals can reflect what we want.

3. The RFP process - I do not want the process to drag out or be cumbersome to the point that it handicaps interest or narrows down potential by not being economically or socially viable. I would propose the use to be some form of business that is useful in attracting tourism revenue and local revenue. I would like to see the approval process select the best value proposal not necessarily the "highest bidder". What proposal fits best for our town will pay dividends much beyond the sale price. What proposal will be most successful and not at risk to fail etc...

Thank you again for your time and consideration,

Dan Butler

8 Brooke Hill Rd.

ps. if we put in a Starbucks and Target that would save us a lot of trips to Waterford!

September 26th, 2018

To: East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee
RE: East Haddam Village property

For those of you that don't know me, my name is Ed Blaschik and I have lived in East Haddam for my entire life. I consider myself fortunate in that I was able to secure a good job in the community in which I live and love.

For the purposes of full disclosure; I am employed at the Goodspeed Opera House. You will often see me at many committee and board meetings. However, making the assumption that I am representing Goodspeed is not correct. I am a life long resident, taxpayer and have a vested interest in MY community. To be clear, I am here today representing myself.

My passion for this town and community runs deep. Many of you have been greeted by me at elections and referendums, or perhaps appealed your tax assessment to the appeals board of which I Chair, or perhaps attended one of the committee meetings for the renovation of this historic building. Nine of the 12 years of my public education took place in this very building and I received my diploma on the stage in the other room. (gymnasium). I am a member of the WPCA and a past member of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Additionally many members of my family have served this community as volunteers and elected officials.

That being said I strongly believe that East Haddam should not sell the property in the Village known as the former Town Office property. It is my opinion that 1 and 7 Main Street is one of the greatest assets the town owns. It is the door and window to our community. It is in your line of sight as you come across the bridge. The Connecticut River views up and down, the historic Swing Bridge the Osprey and Bald Eagles flying high, the hillside of trees on the West Side of the River all represent this Community. Please go stand on the lawn of the River House and take a good look. I am sure there are other communities that wish they had land similar to ours. This community spends hundreds of thousands of dollars to purchase land to preserve the character of the town. We need to maintain control of this valuable asset. Zoning can't do that. Look across the River!

We do not need to sell this property. There is no mortgage and it is not currently on the tax rolls so there is no loss of tax revenue. Selling this property will secure us a one time hit of what a million dollars.... then what? Our town budget is 31+ million dollars. What is a million dollars going to do for us? Short lived return! Once the land is gone you are not going to get it back. I suggest we enter into a 50, 75 or 99 year lease arrangement that would be a gift that kept on giving. Do I think we need or want to be a landlord or develop the property ourselves? No... but we should never give up say on what happens with this important asset and the gateway to our beautiful community.

The optimist in me hopes that whatever development takes place on the property will be a success. But what if the outcome is to the contrary? Businesses open and close frequently. Running a successful business is not easy, concepts and ideas that look great on paper are not always a sure bet. East Haddam will have no say as to whom or what happens to the property should the land end up in the hands of a mortgage company that ultimately sells it to the highest bidder. This community has witnessed the state purchasing property, removing it from the tax roles with it becoming a blighted and abandoned property. You can't put a dollar value on the cost to the community. Many of us in this room are familiar with what happened in this community in the 70's, have we not learned a lesson? Those drawings and pictures were beautiful! How many plans, proposals and concepts have we seen for other properties in town? What is happening with some of those properties today? We don't own them, don't have say over use nor tax status....only to the extent allowed by regulation. Regulation that can change!

Whether written or not there are encumbrances on the property. A restaurant and other businesses have been given use of the land and are dependent upon that use. The generator and repair services building for the bridge sit on the land. The parking area is used as a staging area for the repair and operation of the bridge. You can't miss the many orange vehicles parked there on a routine basis. There is a cost to these rights that I would think only lessen the value of the property to a potential buyer.

What is the Middletown arrangement with the operators of the Harbor Park property? What other cities or municipalities own land along a river that have lease arrangements with developers? This land is the gateway to our town. It is too valuable to just take a check and walk away with hopes that our zoning and regulations will protect and maintain the character we so cherish in our town.

In closing I plead with this committee..... please get those creative thinking caps on...do some research, there has to be a way to develop this land that includes a recommendation to the Board of Selectman and ultimately to the towns people that has East Haddam retaining ownership with a win win for both the developer and our town. East Haddam has to be a partner with the developer. East Haddam has to be at the table and have some level of control over the property in perpetuity. There won't be another chance tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Edward C Blaschik