



TOWN OF LEDYARD

CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

Chairman Kevin J. Dombrowski

MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
LEDYARD TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS - ANNEX BUILDING

DRAFT

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

6:15 PM, SEPTEMBER 13, 2023

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Dombrowski called to order the Public Hearing regarding the proposed transfer/conveyance of the following town owned properties to the Avalonia Land Conservancy: (1) 334 Colonel Ledyard Highway; (2) 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway at 6:15 p.m.
- I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- II. PROCEDURE OF THE PUBLIC HEARING
- III. CALL OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

The following call of the Public Hearing was read by Town Council Administrative Assistant Roxanne M. Maher:

LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF LEDYARD

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with CGS 07-163e the Ledyard Town Council will conduct a Hybrid Format (In-Person and Video Conference) Public Hearing on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, at 6:15 p.m. to receive comment on the following:

The transfer/conveyance of the following town owned properties to the Avalonia Land Conservancy to remain open to the public for passive recreation and to be protected in perpetuity under the Conservancy's care:

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------------|
| (1) | 334 Colonel Ledyard Highway (Vol. 604 Pg 763) | 29,752 +/-SF |
| (2) | 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway (Vol. 99 Pg 139) | 3.32 +/- Acres |

Avalonia Land Conservancy will pay for all conveyances and fees regarding the transfer of property.

Please join the Public Hearing in-person or remotely as follows:

In-person attendance will be at the
Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building
741 Colonel Ledyard Highway, Ledyard, Connecticut

Join the video conference meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone at:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84560917819?pwd=SEZSZE9UNUtHenB2OWIzZVp2WXF0dz09>
or by audio only dial: +1 646 558 8656 Meeting ID: 845 6091 7819; Passcode: 790916

At this hearing interested persons may appear and be heard and written communications will be accepted at towncouncil@ledyardct.org.

A vote regarding the transfer/conveyance of these properties will be held at a Special Town Meeting scheduled for September 13, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Dated at Ledyard, Connecticut this 31st day of August, 2023.

PLEASE PUBLISH: August 31, 2023 & September 4, 2023

IV. PRESENTATION

Mayor Allyn, III provided some background stating that these two parcels (334 & 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway) would provide access to the Founders Preserve (approximate 96.52 +/- acres) property, which the townspeople approved to convey to Avalonia at the October 28, 2020 Special Town Meeting.

Mayor Allyn went on to explain in 2006 the Founders Preserve property was subdivided into a 36-lot subdivision with about 4,500 linear feet or two-thirds of a mile of new road and approximately forty-five new drainage structures, noting that it would have required a significant amount of financial input from the town. He stated that because the road was never constructed none of the building lots were sold. However, he stated that tax bills were generated for 36 approved building lots which were zoned R-60. He went on to explain during the 2007/2008 recession the tax bills accrued, and the Town foreclosed on the Developer for unpaid taxes and took ownership of the Founders Preserve property. He stated since then the Town acquired 334 Colonel Ledyard Highway. He stated although there was some frontage on Paint Mill Pentway that there was not clear access to the Founders Preserve Property.

Mayor Allyn continued by providing history on each of the properties being considered to be conveyed this evening as follows:

334 Colonel Ledyard Highway: Mayor Allyn stated this has been a blighted property for many years. The last time the town placed a Blight Lien (4th blight lien) on the property the owner offered the town the deed in lieu of foreclosure, because he did not want to pay the lien. He stated after acquiring the property the town obtained a Demolition Permit for the house that had been condemned by the Building Department. He stated the structure had a small amount of asbestos in the roofing mastic which would be removed; and the town has obtained a Permit to Abandon the Well from Ledge Light Health District, which involved filling the well with gravel. He stated once the structure has been removed from the property the town would convey a 29,752 +/- strip of land to Avalonia Land Conservancy; which would provide frontage and suitable public access to the open space Founders Preserve (approximate 96.52 +/- acres) property. He stated Avalonia Land Conservancy planned to gravel this area to provide a visible, accessible parking lot off the road that would accommodate about 8 – 10 cars for the public to access the Founders Preserve Property. He stated Avalonia Land Conservancy paid to have the property resurveyed to restore the property boundary lines back to the original boundaries prior to the subdivision plan, which put the detached garage that was associated with an adjacent property, 332 Colonel Ledyard Highway, back onto the same parcel as the house. He stated the Founders Preserve would open up to some Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) property through the Chesebrough Farm Subdivision.

Mayor Allyn went on to note that Mr. Eric Treaster, who was attending tonight's Public Hearing via Zoom Video Conference had expressed concern about the town demolishing the house at the Town Council's August 23, 2023 meeting. Mayor Allyn stated the dilapidated house located at 334 Colonel Ledyard Highway had been condemned by the Building Department for reasons which included significant water damage and it was unsafe. He stated that he brought Councilor Saums into the house, noting that they did not stay inside too long because the roof had failed, and that they feared the floors would collapse.

538R Colonel Ledyard Highway: Mayor Allyn stated this property was comprised of two-flag lots. He explained around 2015 several lots were created on the north side of the property for the Outback Stables Subdivision on Colonel Ledyard Highway (formerly Applewood's Farm), which included a 3.32 +/- acre open space parcel (538 Colonel Ledyard Highway) to meet the Subdivision Requirements. He stated Avalonia Land Conservancy Board of Directors President Dennis Main who was attending tonight's Public Hearing remotely, had approached him indicating that Avalonia Land Conservancy was going to be receiving the Pike-Marshall Preserve from the Nature Conservancy and that the parcel located at 535R Colonel Ledyard Highway would be beneficial to Avalonia Land Conservancy because it was on a high side of a large swamp and would allow people, who were accessing the open space, to walk on the higher, dry side of the swamp. Mayor Allyn noted that 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway was contiguous to land that Avalonia Land Conservancy recently acquired, and therefore, it would be a good parcel to convey to Avalonia Land Conservancy.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Please limit to 3 minutes)

Chairman Dombrowski opened the floor for public comments.

Ms. Jean Scialabba, 125 Lambtown Road, Ledyard, stated she has been a lifelong member of Avalonia Land Conservancy and that she fully supported open space and the work that Avalonia Conservancy has done in many towns, and especially here in Ledyard. She stated Avalonia Land Conservancy was fortunate to have the opportunity to acquire 334 Colonel Ledyard Highway. She stated that she and her husband have lived in town for over forty-five years and that during the past twenty-years she has looked at the derelict house as she drove up and down Colonel Ledyard Highway, and wondered what was going to be done to that property. She stated what an opportunity this was to be able to access the 96.52 +/- acres Founders Preserve and have another beautiful hiking area in our town. She stated that she and her husband Robert fully supported the conveyance of these two properties (334 & 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway). She stated they also hike the Pike-Marshall Preserve and not having to hike through the muck would be great.

Mr. Neil Duncan, 73 Gallup Hill Road, Ledyard, stated he was a member of Avalonia Land Conservancy and that he was the Chairman of the Avalonia Stewardship Committee. He stated he appreciated Mayor Allyn's remarks introducing the two parcels (334 & 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway) that were being considered for conveyance this evening. He stated from the Avalonia Land Conservancy's perspective these two preserves represented fantastic wildlife and opportunities for people to see, explore and appreciate the local area. He stated that he fully supported the conveyance of these two properties.

Mrs. Barbara Duncan, 73 Gallup Hill Road, Ledyard, stated the Pike-Marshall Preserve abutted the Burton Property that was directly opposite their house. She stated with the acquisition of the property behind Outback Stables it would provide a connection between the Burton Property and the Pike-Marshall Preserve, which would also connect to the trail that runs by the High School. She stated that this would provide an opportunity for the High School runners to run in Ledyard without having to run on the roads. She went on to note as others have mentioned that she and her husband have also driven by the 334 Colonel Ledyard Highway property noting that it has been a rotten old property for the last twenty-years. She stated having a parking lot for the Founders Preserve would also enable safe access to the property. She stated that she fully supported the conveyance of these two properties (334 & 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway) to Avalonia Land Conservancy.

Mr. Eric Treaster, 10 Huntington Way, Ledyard, attending remotely, stated that he was going to be the outlier this evening regarding the conveyance of 334 & 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway to Avalonia Land Conservancy. He stated Ledyard's Zoning Regulations were changed so that residential density was now established for multi-family units as a function of the Health Code, instead of number of bedrooms per acre.

He stated in addition, the town was slowly adopting public water and public sewers and that he believed in 100-years that the entire town would be supplied with public water and public sewers. He stated it was also his understanding that the 96.52 +/- acres Founders Preserve Property has not yet been conveyed to Avalonia Land Conservancy. He stated his concern was that with public water and public sewer, and with multi-family density established by the health code that in 100-years Ledyard may have as many as 100,000 people. He stated with that kind of density and the town's current rules for Affordable Housing, which would encourage maximum density, that future parks were going to be valuable. He stated someday Ledyard was going to need more than one Blonders Park; and he stated giving this property away would forever prevent the town from having another quality park like Blonders Park. He stated he was sort of opposed to giving land away in perpetuity, even for a good cause. He stated he did not want to see the town make another mistake like they did in 1966 when the Reservoir was essentially given away to Groton for \$1.00. He stated potential future uses of the Founders Preserve property could include development, noting that he believed this land would be valuable in the future.

Chairman Dombrowski responded to Mr. Treaster's comments, stating that tonight's Public Hearing was regarding the conveyance of 334 & 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway to Avalonia Land Conservancy and that it was not about the 96.52 +/- acres Founders Preserve Property. He stated the townspeople already voted to convey the Founders Preserve Property to Avalonia Land Conservancy at a Special Town Meeting that was held on October 28, 2020.

Mr. Dennis Main, 4 Hough Road, Bozrah, Avalonia Land Conservancy Board of Directors President, stated he was born and raised in Ledyard. He stated that he thought enough has been explained about the benefits of this project this evening; and so, he did not need to echo those comments. However, he stated that he would like to thank Mayor Allyn, III, the Town Council, Land Use Director Juliet Hodge, Conservation Commission Michael Marrelli, and the many others who worked on this initiative. He stated acquiring these parcels would provide a safe, off-road, accessible parking area; much like the parking area for the Barret Preserve. He stated it has been a pleasure working with Ledyard and he thanked the town for considering the conveyance of 334 & 538R Colonel Ledyard Highway.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further public comment, Chairman Dombrowski adjourned the public hearing at 6:30 p.m.

Transcribed by Roxanne M. Maher
Administrative Assistant to the Town Council

I, Kevin J. Dombrowski, Chairman of the Ledyard Town Council,
hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct
copy of the minutes of the Public Hearing held on September 13, 2023

Attest: _____
Kevin J. Dombrowski, Chairman