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October 24, 2024

Planning and Zoning Commission
Town of Ledyard, Connecticut
741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT 06339-1511

Dear Commission:

The American Battlefield Trust (the "Trust") is the largest non-profit organization in the nation dedicated to the preservation of Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and American Civil War battlefields. The Trust has preserved close to 60,000 acres of battlefield land across the continental United States.

Members of the Ledyard community have kept the Trust informed regarding the impact of the planned development by Gales Ferry Intermodal, LLC near the site of Fort Decatur, one of Connecticut's most significant sites dating back to the War of 1812 and urged us to contact the Commission once more. The Trust remains concerned with the severe negative impact the proposed aggregate mining will have on Fort Decatur and the area surrounding it.

Fort Decatur is one of only a few fort sites surviving from this time period in our country and is among the best preserved. These archaeological sites are often the best educational resource available to the public for understanding the lives of people at war. This site's association with war hero and U.S. Navy icon Commodore Stephen Decatur, Jr., is not only important for Connecticut history, but for the United States more broadly. These elements make Fort Decatur significant enough to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was fortunate that the former owner of the parcel recognized this importance, protected the site, and permitted members of the community to access this piece of our collective heritage.

The Trust understands that the proposed mining operation spares the heart of the fort, which is a good start. However, archaeological sites are not tightly confined--the people living at Fort Decatur moved beyond its walls, and the current viewshed maintains historical integrity. Archaeological sites and views are nonrenewable--we simply cannot produce more sites from 1812, whereas there are other locations where aggregate could be mined. Fort Decatur is a truly unique historic resource and certainly worth protecting along with its immediate viewshed. This sentiment is echoed by the local community and other partners who appreciate the historic significance of this site.

As the proposed mining and development operations would negatively impact historic resources, the Trust urges the Zoning Commission to withhold approval of the special permit application until discussions can take place concerning the preservation of this incredibly unique and important Connecticut, and American, resource.

Very truly yours,

Kathleen Robertson
Kathleen M. Robertson
Director of Project Management

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