

Town of Haddam  
Office of the First Selectman



30 Field Park Drive  
Haddam, CT 06438  
860.345.8531  
F: 860.345.3730  
www.haddam.org  
selectmen@haddam.org

PROPOSED PROPERTY EXCHANGE

The following is a position statement on the proposed land transfer between the owners of the River House banquet facility and the Department of Environmental Protection that is up for consideration in the State legislature.

Although I believe in truth that the proposal is not sponsored by the Town of Haddam, it cannot be overstated that the Town will indeed be the beneficiary of its ultimate completion, and therefore, it is only right that all levels of our town officials weigh the proposal carefully. Such reflection, however, must be void of special interest influence and in the best interests of the town as a whole. So with that intention in mind, the following are a few of the thoughts that have influenced me to recommend this transfer be approved.

Haddam, to the best of my knowledge, is the only town in Connecticut that is bisected by a major waterway. Our shores are divided by the beautiful and mighty Connecticut River which once gave sustenance to our economic growth through its bountiful energy and its efficient transportation outlets. Although that time has passed, and we now look to her for her environmental assets, she is still the heart of our territorial identity and as such deserves the care and respect of our stewardship. Having her on our shores, in a way, is like having an original Rembrandt on our back porch; without appreciation, her beauty goes unnoticed and underutilized.

I have come to believe that the passage of the land transfer in question will indeed help Haddam to avoid such waste. It will result in much needed tourism which will translate into more jobs and more environmental comprehension and awareness. It will also provide a synergy of opportunity with the neighboring Town of East Haddam and bolster the economy of both towns as we seek to strengthen our infrastructure to deal with the challenges of the future. This proposal, in my mind, offers Haddam a reason to stimulate its lagging regulation and zoning reform for the Tylerville Village so that our foundation can support the type of future development that will be consistent with the environmental, cultural, and business goals that are a part of our Conservation and Development Plan. I also believe that passage will insure that the major parcel of land in Higganum that adjoins the State forest will not be developed in such a manner that would saddle the town with future educational expenses, costs that would only continue to hurt our attempts to survive in this weak, punishing economy.

In 2012, the Town of Haddam will be celebrating the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its settlement. I can't think of a better way to propel that celebration than with an image for a brighter future. For these reasons, I support the recommended transfer, and if passed, will work with the Gateway Commission, Planning and Zoning, and the Economic Development Commission to insure that all environmental, infrastructure, and business partners will work together toward the common goal of enhancing the natural resources of our town while providing an opportunity for it to strengthen and flourish.

Paul J. DeStefano  
First Selectman