

Town of Barkhamsted
Incorporated 1779

Public Hearing – March 17, 2014 – Government Administration and Elections Committee

Testimony Submitted by Donald Stein, First Selectman, Town of Barkhamsted

Regarding HB 5550: The Conveyance of Certain Parcels of State Land

Good afternoon Chairman Musto, Senator McLachlan, Representative Jutila, and Representative Hwang and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Don Stein and I'm the First Selectman of Barkhamsted.

I first wish to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 5550, Section 7 of which, will convey to the town of Barkhamsted a parcel of land that includes our Senior and Community Center. This property and the original building it contains was first leased to the Town by the State of Connecticut in February 1987, 27 years ago. At approximately the same time, the Town received two Small Cities Block grants. The first was used to improve the original structure and the second added a large community meeting room and kitchen to the facility. The facility includes two apartments on the second floor, one of which is a residence. The other is an emergency shelter.

Since that time, the Town has paid for the maintenance and infrastructure upgrades, routine upkeep, utilities, and all other costs associated with the Senior Center. It is staffed by volunteers who serve lunch on Tuesdays and breakfast on Thursdays to our seniors and those of the surrounding communities. Those meals typically serve 50 to 90 participants. The Center is also used for programs focused on the seniors and other members of the community, including our Historical Society and other service groups. Most recently, we put a new roof on the building at Town expense and added an emergency generator under a STEAP grant.

Our lease expired in February 2012. Based on this history, it seemed logical that the Town should own the property due to the amount of financial support and sweat equity invested in it by the community. This is not an expansion of the use of the property.

The request in the conveyance bill is for a 2.6 acre parcel in the southeast corner of American Legion State Forest adjacent to a DEEP office. The parcel size is based on the town's zoning regulations (2 acre lot size minimum) and the need to allow for expanded parking resulting from the high volume of center usage. The size of the parcel also allows the Town to avoid any conflict with Wetlands regulations and to comply with the recommendations of DEEP's Bureau of Natural Resources regarding species in the area.

Barkhamsted's preservation and use of this property, and the facilities we have developed in partnership with the State and the Federal government, have well-served our community's residents, and the wide range of folks who use it.

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Thank you for your time and your consideration and the opportunity to meet with you.