



TOWN OF GROTON

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March 19, 2015

Testimony regarding Bill 5720

Up front and in the first sentence I would like to state that I am a firm supporter of Bill #5720. An alternate testing site for samples has been long needed for shellfishing interests not only in Groton but, in Southeastern Connecticut.

My background understanding this proposal is extensive as is my experience participating in Groton's government. I have been an elected member of Groton's Town Council for nearly 25 years with three terms in this office serving as our Mayor. My origins to volunteerism go back to the 1980s where I was a member of the Town of Groton Shellfish Commission. I currently participate in the stocking of shellfish to our recreational areas with our Shellfish Commission and yes, I do shellfish myself.

Here in Groton (Noank) we also have a Town owned facility which is leased to a cooperative of shellfish farmers. The hatchery was taken from the State of Connecticut as surplus property back in the early 2000s. I was on the lease committee with the cooperative group representing the Town of Groton when it was first acquired. The cooperative would benefit immensely from a facility at Avery Point. These good folks are hardworking individuals and deserve anything that would expedite their business. A fair number of people are employed here.

Recreational shellfishing here in Groton is very popular and contributes a great deal to our economy. People chose the Groton area as a destination specifically because they can do a little "clamming." All of these visitors buy food, visit local tackle shops, and shop. I have a specific example to cite here. Last year speaking to a local tackle shop owner I heard the following story. The owner would stock clamming rakes for people to purchase to go clamming. The rakes were made locally by a small business person. Our shellfish beds were not open. They may have been open had there been a laboratory facility at Avery Point to run samples to satisfy regulations. Here a local business lost revenue, another couldn't build inventory to sell, and people stayed away that may have otherwise visited the shore.

All of our Shellfish Commission Members work very hard to keep compliant with regulations and to protect the public. Our recreational shellfishing here in Groton would benefit from such a facility because of current logistics and, lack of adequate resources transporting samples to the State lab.

Thank you for considering my testimony and please feel free to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Harry A. Watson
Town Councilor