

March 13, 2016

To: gaetestimony@cga.ct.gov

Subject: GAE Committee Testimony on H.B. 5619 and S.J. 36 3/14

Copy: Representatives John Scott and Aundre Bumgardner

H.B. 5619

Dear GAE Committee:

Thanks for holding a public hearing on this important issue. I strongly oppose H.B. 5619.

As you know, Section 8 says:"(*Effective from passage*) (a) Notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall convey to the town of Groton six parcels of land located in the town of Groton, at no cost. The first parcel of land has an area of approximately 24.5 acres and is identified as Groton Assessor's property identification number 271018207236E. The second parcel of land has an area of approximately 36.5 acres and is identified as a portion of Groton Assessor's property identification number 261906386767E. The third and fourth parcels of land have an area of approximately 4 acres and are identified as Groton Assessor's property identification number 271018408826E. The fifth parcel of land has an area of approximately 1 acre and is identified as Groton Assessor's property identification number 261907581499E. The sixth parcel of land has an area of approximately .5 acre and is identified as Groton Assessor's property identification number 261910463851. The conveyance shall be subject to the approval of the State Properties Review Board.

(b) The town of Groton shall use said parcels of land for economic development, recreational and open space purposes."

Various consulting firms hired every few years over more than a decade have again and again detailed exactly what The Town of Groton should do to encourage development: urban infill including mixed use zoning along Route 1, use of empty commercial and industrial buildings, and development of the many 100 acre sites for sale. These are just a few of the obvious recommendations but not one of these recommendations has been executed by Town management. Aging schools, duplication of town services, and a tired town website speak for themselves as does

the poor management of large projects: the Mystic Streetscape program, the Copp Property trail improvement grant and the 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development 2012 "Update" being now in it's fifth year with yet no draft for review.

One part of having a community attractive to live in is quality of recreational opportunities. And it is important that the ownership of this key property in H.B. 5619 on the Mystic River be owned and maintained by the State rather than become yet another Town white elephant. The Town will have challenge enough to deliver on a good development proposal for the existing Oral School property. And if the transfer were to take place, then does the line move to Gungywamp, Haley Farm or to the crown jewel, Bluff Point, which 400,000 people per year enjoy?

Mixed use zoning was approved by the Town's commission in 2007 yet there has not been one single application since that time. New Town staff and commissioners are working together to make the regulations even more user friendly but the problem remains that the Town needs new leadership to figure out how to encourage economic development with what we have. There is more than ample opportunity here.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susan K. Sutherland, as a resident of the Town of Groton

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