



P.O. Box 271646
West Hartford, Connecticut 06127

14 March 2016

RE: Park Watershed comments: SUPPORT: [SJ 36](#)
Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee

SUPPORT: [SJ 36](#) would place a Constitutional Amendment on the ballot to better protect public lands with agricultural, conservation, and recreational values by ensuring:

To Whom It May Concern:

Park Watershed is a 501c3 urban-suburban watershed stewardship organization for Park River regional watershed, which stretches east of the Metacomet Ridge through MDC reservoir properties to the Connecticut River. West Hartford, Hartford and Bloomfield as well as parts of Newington, New Britain, Farmington and Wethersfield are within the Park River watershed. Our organizational goal is to improve the water quality and ecosystem health of water courses and water bodies that enhance neighborhood character even within high-density urban development.

As one of the state's most densely developed watershed, the Park River regional watershed is a layered with planning history. Most importantly, the history of municipal parks, which are integral to the cultural heritage of Hartford, where landscape architect Fredrick Law Olmsted was born and is buried. Increasingly historic city parkland and open space is being sold off as decision makers seek economic gain. Unfortunately few municipalities respect the interests of citizens that are often clearly outlined in the local ten year Plan of Conservation and Development.

SUPPORT: [SJ 36](#) would place a Constitutional Amendment on the ballot to better protect public lands with agricultural, conservation, and recreational values by ensuring:

- A public hearing before any giveaway, sale, swap, or change of use;
- Compensation for a loss of public lands would equal or exceed the values being lost in the region where they would be lost;
- A 2/3 majority vote; and
- A separate bill for each proposed giveaway, sale, swap, or change of use

Increasingly municipal staff and elected officials under-estimate the significance of neighborhood public landscapes and open spaces. Tax abatements are mistakenly given to developers before the public realizes what is happening to places valued by the community. Because notification is insufficient, Park Watershed fully supports SJ 36.

Sincerely,

Mary Rickel Pelletier
Founding Director