

Commerce Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-167

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISPOSITION OF THE FORMER SEASIDE

Title: SANATORIUM FACILITY.

Vote Date: 3/22/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/16/2021

File No.: 353

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Paul M. Formica, 20th Dist.

Sen. Catherine A. Osten, 19th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

SB 167 would require the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection to consult with the Governor, the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development and officials of the town of Waterford and adjacent landowners to develop and issue a request for information for low-impact, residential uses for the former Seaside Sanatorium facility in the town of Waterford.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection recognizes the importance of Seaside State Park to the local community in Waterford, as well as to the broader public, and our Department continues to see great promise for improving the park for all to enjoy. With modest enhancements consistent with a “passive park” approach, Seaside State Park will ensure continued full public access and increased public recreation opportunities such as swimming and paddling

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Rob Brule, First Selectman of the town of Waterford ultimately supports SB 167 for the following reasons:

- Facilitating the return of some portion of the land to contribute to Waterford's tax base
- Preserving meaningful public access to our coastal resources
- Promoting responsible, resilient development

- Celebrating the history of the property

Ultimately the town of Waterford supports the bill because it returns a portion of the property to private, residential use, thereby facilitating responsible development and preserving a portion of the property for public access to our coastline

Connecticut State Senator Paul Formica (20th Senate District) is in support of SB 167 because it would portion off a park of the property for public park access

Connecticut State Representative Kathleen M. McCarty (38th Assembly District) is supportive of the Department of Economic and Community Development establishing and reopening an RFP process in another attempt to find a developer with the necessary financial resources to restore and reuse the historic building(s) and for the state to maintain most of the adjacent land as a state park.

Such a public private partnership scenario would benefit both the town, and its tax base while preserving at the same time the majority of the property and its shoreline for the enjoyment and use by the public, and Waterford's residents.

I will state for the record that I am adamantly opposed to any large commercial development on the Seaside property that eliminates the state park and access by the public to its shoreline.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut State Representative Mary Mushinsky (85th Assembly District) is in opposition to SB 167 because it would force DEEP away from its stakeholder process and the agency's careful attempt to re-use the facility as an income-producing structure while maintaining public access to the coast, it would also decree a development solution to the failure to attract a bidder with the resources to recycle the sanitorium buildings

Susan Whalen, Board member of the Friends of Connecticut State Parks is in opposition to the bill because I believe directing the DECD to issue another RFP is premature. While I am sure the DEEP would welcome the advice and support of DECD in the weeks and months ahead, I urge the Committee to allow DEEP and the Friends of Seaside State Park to continue their work toward the goal of adaptive re-use of the historic buildings and maximum public access to the shoreline.

Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association is in opposition to SB 167 for the following reasons:

- **Public Access to Long Island Sound is rare and highly valued**
 - State Parks like Hammonasset, Rocky Neck, Sherwood Island, Silver Sands, and Seaside together provide access to fewer than 7 miles of the Long Island Sound shoreline
- **Aren't we concerned about Sea Level Rise and Climate Change-fueled storms?**
 - Approximately half of the 32-acre property and most of its existing buildings are within the 500-year flood zone

- **Another Request for Proposals (RFP) at Seaside State Park is unnecessary and premature**
 - The Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) issued an RFP in 2018 after a Master Plan, extensive public input process, and Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) were conducted in conformance with CEPA
- **RFP's shouldn't be compelled by legislation**
 - It is bad precedent and problematic for the future management of State Parks if RFP's were issued at various Parks based on legislation that may be parochial, versus being issued through the administrative discretion of a state agency tasked with managing parks for the entire public.
- **If public resources are to be spent, the public should benefit**
 - If the site were to be developed, redeveloped, or rehabbed in the future as part of a public-private partnership, a prospective private developer would likely need and/or request significant public resources to support the venture.

Reported by: Jason Snukis

Date: April 5, 2021