

Former Cedarcrest Hospital, Newington and Wethersfield

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection – Recommendation to Preserve Significant Natural Resources

Responses to Public Comments

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection had published a notice in the Environmental Monitor on October 22, 2013 announcing our draft recommendation that a portion of the Cedarcrest Hospital property be preserved through a conservation easement. Two public comments were received (complete comments are attached). Comments were received from Margaret Miner of the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut and from Holly Harlow, a resident of Newington. The latter supported the Department's recommended preservation of a portion of the property through a conservation easement and requires no response. Ms. Miner raised issues related to the specificity of the easement, a potential water source at the site, wetlands and streams on the property, and reuse of the property as a State Data Center.

The preservation of a portion of the property through a conservation easement in favor of the Department will prohibit activities that would adversely impact the habitat and open space values of the property, will be recorded on the land records, and will be enforceable by the State of Connecticut Attorney General.

The Department was unable to identify a water source or a potential water source at the property, which is supplied public water by the Metropolitan District Commission. The Department of Public Health has no records of any public water supply wells on or near the property. The nearest public supply well is located on the south side of Route 175 just west of the Berlin Turnpike. There are also no records of a well abandonment (going back to 1988).

The Preservation Parcel and the Conveyance Parcel, as identified in the Department's October 3, 2013 letter, include most of the undeveloped area of the property to the west of Russell Road. Although there are no mapped wetlands or watercourses on this property, any undisturbed wetlands with values worth preserving would be within this protected area. There are mapped wetlands on the property to the east of Russell Road. The Department will rely on regulation by the Newington Conservation Commission to protect these areas.

The Department is not in a position to comment on the previous plan to use the property for a State Data Center, but it would appear that this plan has been abandoned, which has led to the property being identified as surplus.

Fox, David

From: Margaret Miner [rivers@riversalliance.org]
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2013 4:09 PM
To: Fox, David
Cc: Mathieu, Lori; 'Amy Paterson'; martin.mador@aya.yale.edu
Subject: Cedar Crest Hospital

TO: Mr. David Fox:

Thanks to DEEP for recommending important conservation areas at Cedarcrest Hospital in Newington and Wethersfield.

We urge that the recommendation to use conservation easements be more specific so as to ensure conservation in perpetuity of this exceptionally valuable habitat and open space.

I see that the property apparently contains a water source, but do not find further details. I assume that, since this is state-owned property, there are no official Class I or II lands. However, there is likely to be a water source that should be protected, and I ask that DEEP consult with DPH on this issue.

I do not see a description of wetlands and streams, if any, but these, too, should be assessed for conservation value.

I reprint below passage from a local newspaper quoting the Newington Economic Development Director to the effect that one of assets of the property is that it is "green." Therefore, for economic as well as ecological reasons, please do not degrade the greenness.

Finally, I reprint an excerpt from a DAS report proposing that this property be used for a State Data Center. This would be consistent with numerous requirement for effective state planning. I hope this idea has not been abandoned.

Thanks, Margaret Miner, Exec. Dir., Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

EXCERPTS

NEWINGTON, CT (WFSB) -

The state is looking for possible buyers for a blighted piece of property in Newington that used to be the site of an old psychiatric hospital.

In 2001, the state closed Cedarcrest Hospital along the Berlin Turnpike, due to budget constraints.

Now, state officials are hoping to find a developer who will lease or purchase the land where the former 103-bed hospital stands.

"It's big, it's green, it's private, it's quiet," said Newington Economic Development Director Andy Brecher. "In the days of high tech innovation, I could see this place turned into a campus for pharmaceutical research, for software development."

DAS

The propose project involves the demolition of vacant Building #11 (29,698 square feet [SF]) and vacant Building #29 (14,484 SF) located at the former Cedarcrest Hospital facility in Newington, Connecticut (see attached figure). Demolition of the buildings are necessary for the construction of a new state-of-the-art Data Center and site improvements. The new facility would be approximately 25,000 SF and allow for a minimum for twenty-five (25) staff parking spaces.

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Fox, David

From: Holly Harlow [HHarlow@mohawknortheast.com]
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2013 3:24 PM
To: Fox, David
Subject: Cedar Crest Hospital

David Fox
Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
Office of Environmental Review
79 Elm Street
Hartford CT 06107

November 22, 2013

Dear Mr. Fox:

As a resident of Newington and a long-time activist for the conservation and preservation of Cedar Mountain, I wholeheartedly agree and support the Department's recommendation that the, as yet, undeveloped area surrounding the former Cedar Crest Hospital be transferred by conservation easement to the town. This action would be highly significant in the on-going efforts to maintain Cedar Mountain in a natural state for this and future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

It is actions like this that give the invaluable natural assets of the state a chance to survive and thrive.

Thank you very much for your work in this regard.

Sincerely,

Holly Harlow
11 Edmund Street
Newington CT 06111

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