

**CONNECTICUT BAR ASSOCIATION
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW SECTION MEETING MINUTES**

Minutes of Meeting –November 21, 2006

INTRODUCTION & BUSINESS

Meeting convenes at 6:45 p.m.

Matt Ranelli, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the Hawthorne Inn.

Treasurer's Report was given by **Keith Ainsworth**. Currently, the Section has a balance of \$4,491.27 but is operating at a loss. As was reported last month, the Section and the CBA are looking to resolve the issue and put the Section back on track for a positive balance by the end of the year.

Other Business

Doug Pelham provided a CLE Update and indicated that topics are needed and consideration is being given to a CLE program in New London.

From the Program Committee, **Beth Critten** also requested ideas for Section programs.

Chair Ranelli reported on behalf of the Legislative Committee. **Matt Hallisey's** departure was acknowledged and good wishes extended. **Don Phillips** would be filling the position temporarily. CBA is looking for a replacement to be on board before the start of the legislative session. Certain issues are being considered by the General Assembly that could affect this Section's practice of law: (1) registration of attorneys who represent clients at the municipal level. CBA will oppose this proposal; and (2) the establishment of a pilot program for centralized hearings for all state agencies except DEP. This is proposed by the Administrative Law Section and will be supported by CBA.

Greg Sharp then reported on the Audubon award to **Dan Lufkin** and extended his appreciation and thanks to the Section for its resolution.

FEATURED SPEAKER

Chair Ranelli introduced DEP Commissioner **Gina McCarthy**, who thanked the Section members for the contributions that our Section members make for the agency. **Commissioner McCarthy** acknowledged that she is looking forward to the next four years and is very appreciative and excited about her staff, who she said are incredible professionals and who want the agency to work efficiently and effectively.

Commissioner McCarthy then reported on her objectives: (1) Organization. There will be no big reorganization but subtle administrative changes to build on the structure and the strengths of the staff. She also introduced **Melinda Decker** as an in-house DEP attorney. (2) Technology. Improvements are needed to DEP's internal technology. (3) File Room. The file room needs to be modernized, more useable, user friendly and accessible. (4) Remediation Division. This division historically struggles with decision making; the staff works very hard so different management structures are being evaluated to make it more effective. (5) Comprehensive

Revision to Delegation of Authority. Commissioner McCarthy wants to build a platform to encourage dialogue between the stakeholders and DEP before it gets to the Commissioner level. (6) Staff Training. With the turnover of staff due to retirement and the projected turnover in the future, the management and staff require management training. Also, individuals at all levels need to understand the decision making process so they can understand and build upon the decisions previously made. (7) Website. A new, more user-friendly website is in the works with “e-alerts”, regulations, policies, and regulation tracking. Electronic licensing for fish and game is on the horizon. The new website is expected to be launched around January 1, 2007.

New initiatives the Department is looking to propose and support: (1) Clean Water Fund. State involvement is needed to protect water quality. (2) Enforcement. The focus will be primarily on achieving compliance, especially RCRA compliance. (3) Remediation. Improvements are needed with the LEP system and the “verifications”. (4) RSR changes are on the horizon. (5) The New State Solid Waste Management Plan will focus on reduction, reuse and recycling. (6) Dams. Connecticut has around 5,000 dams and some are very old. They are sold with a lot of liability attached and new owners have no idea of the cost of repair.

In response to a lively question and answer session, the Commissioner reported on a Grassland Habitat Initiative which includes: (a) DEP purchasing open space; (b) habitat realignment; and (c) a wildlife habitat strategy.

Commissioner McCarthy also reviewed the extremely successful No Child Left Inside and Great Park Pursuit programs and indicated that the Great Park Pursuit game will be back next year. Go to www.nochildleftinside.org for further information. She is also trying to get other states involved in the Great Park Pursuit as it means higher visibility for the parks, reinvigorates the tourist industry and brings Connecticut’s own residents into its parks. Gillette Castle and the Osborne Historic Museum would be decorated for the holidays, with children’s programs. Weather permitting, an ice festival in the parks is planned for January/February.

Commissioner McCarthy also spoke about the Governor’s Order on Responsible Growth and how planning and alignment is needed to address transportation issues, sprawl, Brownfields, affordable housing, and open space and farmland preservation. DEP is doing more GIS work and best practices at the local level. Growth and expansion is going to cross paths with water resources management so planning with the municipalities is necessary. She also discussed the Tank Fund, coastal development and permitting, LEP audits, the Transfer Act and changes to the RSRs.

Chair Ranelli thanked the Commissioner for a very informative session and invited her to the Section’s holiday party in December.

Next Meeting: No meeting will be held in December. The annual holiday party is the section event and details will be announced.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann M. Catino, Secretary, Environmental Law Section