

The Friends of Gorham's Pond

PO Box 3336

Darien, CT 06820

www.friendsofgorhamspond.org

Letter from John Lundeen, President, Friends of Gorham's Pond

February 24, 2014

The Friends of GorhamsPond(FOGP) is a registered 501(c)3 environmental group, dedicated to the preservation and restoration of the freshwater environment of the Goodwives River/Stony Brook watershed, which encompasses approximately 65% of the land area of the Town of Darien. As President of the Friends, I have been working very closely with the Town Administrator on the Upper Pond Project, as a public/private cooperation.

Since my last update to the Board of Selectmen, in June of last year, our plans have progressed in a couple of major ways. In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, FOGP discovered a great interest at the State DEEP level in finding sand that could be used in the restoration of beaches and protective dunes. We first heard this on June 27th, a week after my last update to this Board. It took us awhile, given summer vacations, sick children, and multiple schedules, but a meeting was finally arranged for August 12th with Deputy Commissioner Macky McCleary of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Our project budget, as reported last June, included \$150,000 in a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) Grant from the State, granted to the Town in 2010. Thanks to our Administrator, Karl Kilduff's considerable experience in grant proposal writing, we have continued to seek further funding for this project, and the Town has submitted grant applications to both the STEAP program (more than once), as well as other sources that had been identified, including the Long Island Sound Futures Fund. As recently as July 18th, Karl had provided the Friends with a negative assessment on our prospects for further State funds in the current environment. Much to everyone's surprise and delight, however, we received an email from Karl, forwarded from Hartford and the Governor's office on August 1, that Darien's project had been included with a \$400,000 STEAP grant, for this project. It would be naïve to associate correlation with cause in this case, but it is just possible that our independent efforts to push the Total Clean System and the potential to scrub large quantities of unwanted sand for statewide reuse may have had something to do with our receiving this grant.

A new technology, the "Total Clean System", which we had been trying to interest the State in for the last three years, has the potential to convert our sediment into a desirable and useful commodity, and it was toward that end that we scheduled the meeting in Hartford to meet with Deputy DEEP Commissioner Mackey McCleary, who brought along a number of his senior department heads for a discussion of what we have been trying to do with first, Gorham's Pond, and then, by extension, the Goodwives River/Stony Brook Watershed. By assembling a senior departmental leader and multiple bureau heads, we were able to get an "informal" reading on the sediment test results that FOGP had been showing around since they were obtained in 2010.

Clearly, they indicated, we would need to do “something” with this sediment before using it in any local “fill” situation.

With that, we once again addressed the Total Clean System, and pointed out that this was part of the recent STEAP grant application submitted (more or less routinely) by Darien. It was hoped that as this grant moved forward, we could move quickly to a test of the usefulness of using that system on our local sediment. If successful, it might make it possible to obtain and use sand locally, something that DEEP and the State would like to achieve.

At the same time that all this discussion with DEEP was going on, and new STEAP Grants were being announced, our Town Administrator had been working through the tough details of lining up with OPM in Hartford, a construction budget that would lead to a contract. This contract would need to be in place between the State and the Town before even the \$150,000 STEAP grant from 2010 could be spent. When we met with DEEP in August, about 12 days after the second STEAP grant was announced, we requested that the administration of both these grants be placed in the hands of the same program manager at DEEP, and we were encouraged to believe that this could take place. She seemed anxious to expedite both contracts and help move the process forward, because until we had the contracts in place, the State money in our project—that is \$550,000 of the \$647,000 now available for it—could not be touched.

Today, we have engineers moving forward with permit applications at the Federal, State, and local levels, funded by the private and local money already committed to the project. Local applications for this project went into the Environmental Preservation Commission (EPC) in Town Hall on Thursday of last week, for action at their March 5th meeting. We are hopeful that soon we will get word that the state grant money contracts have been completed, so that we can begin to implement the “bench-scale test” of the Total Clean system. The results of these tests will determine how we dredge and dispose of sediment, and thus much about the actual construction budget for the project.

A reasonable goal for this public/private partnership is to get our State, Federal, and local permits by May, conduct construction contract bidding (out of the Town Administrators’ office) in May or June, and actually move to construction during the low water period of August-October of this year.

Respectfully submitted,

John Lundeen
President
Friends of Gorham’s Pond, Inc.