

July 31, 2009

William Warner, Director  
Dept. of Planning, Conservation & Development  
City of Middletown  
245 deKoven Drive  
P. O. Box 1300  
Middletown, CT 06457-1300

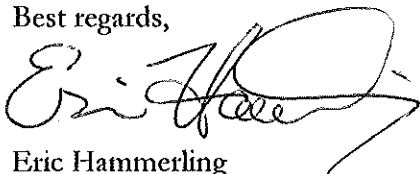
Dear Mr. Warner,

Please accept the enclosed Letter of Intent from the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) as a "placeholder application" for a potential Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail on the 5 parcels currently under lease consideration by Middletown. This proposed Trail would connect to the Mattabesett Trail which has been maintained by CFPA volunteers since 1931 and was recently designated as the New England National Scenic Trail (signed into law by President Obama on March 30, 2009). The New England National Scenic Trail runs through 39 towns (20 in Connecticut and 19 in Massachusetts) and stretches 220 miles all the way up to the Massachusetts/New Hampshire border.

Unfortunately, because of the timing of this RFP, I am unable to get an official endorsement from CFPA's Trails Committee (which does not officially meet until September 9<sup>th</sup>). Our Trails Committee is the body that we ask to consider and vote on any potential new Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails. Despite this logistical timing issue, I hope you will still be able to consider this application.

We also believe that a passive recreational Trail with public access may be quite compatible with many of the options you may be considering under this RFP. I hope to have an opportunity to talk with you further about this application. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 860/346-2372 or via [chammerling@ctwoodlands.org](mailto:chammerling@ctwoodlands.org).

Best regards,



Eric Hammerling  
Executive Director

DEPT. PLANNING & ZONING  
09 JUL 31 AM 10:26

# LETTER OF INTENT FOR HIKING TRAILS IN THE VICINITY OF MAROMAS, MIDDLETOWN

- I. Introduction
- II. Proposal for Hiking Trails Hiking Trails in the Vicinity of Maromas
- III. Proposed Hiking Routes in Parcels 1-5
- IV. Expected Costs for Hiking Trail Proposal
- V. Benefits
- VI. Summation
- VII. Map

## Proposal for Hiking Trails in the Vicinity of Maromas, Middletown

### I. Introduction:

This document constitutes a proposal for an extension of the blue trail system on land parcels in the vicinity of Maromas. These parcels (Parcels 1-5) were conveyed from the state of Connecticut, where they were managed by Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH) to the city of Middletown, with a deed restriction that they remain as open space. An initial informational hearing revealed a need for outdoor recreational facilities with a variety of proposals including an expansion of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System managed by Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA), located in Rockfall Connecticut.

### II. Proposal for Hiking Trail in the Vicinity of Maromas

We propose to extend the existing Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System into these parcels and to create a series of loop trails that may serve to link downtown Middletown with the Mattabesett Trail. The Mattabesett Trail is part of the New England Scenic Trail that begins in Maromas and runs through 39 towns in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Designated open space with hiking trails is in high demand by the general public. By creating new trails, this area of open space will be visited by a variety of hikers both local and out of state. The Mattabesett Trail connects directly to the Metacomet Trail to the west in Meriden. The Metacomet Trail then travels north through Farmington, West Hartford, East Granby, Suffield, and into Massachusetts where serious hikers can connect to the scenic Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom range. Adding additional hiking trails to the preexisting 825 miles of statewide trails will enhance the experience for hikers at a time when more people are exploring open spaces for recreation and fitness. This proposal will add

approximately 5 miles of additional hiking trails and would afford several loop trails that are more popular than linear trails when it comes to hikes undertaken.

### **III. Proposed Hiking Routes in Parcels 1-5 (see map)**

#### **Parcel 1: Northern Parcel-Connecticut River**

This parcel is exceptional in its ability to access Connecticut River views. With its curving watercourse, the Connecticut River affords the hiker numerous vistas of river frontage. It would be possible for hikers to start walking from downtown Middletown along River Road, which could then lead into the new trail system in Parcel 1. There are well-developed plans to develop the Riverfront in Middletown, south of downtown. Those plans would extend pedestrian paths close to the edge of Parcel 1. Mature mixed forest abounds along the river's edge and along the defunct New York, New Haven and Harford Railroad, which also follows the river's course. Located within this eastern parcel is the old silver and lead mine that could be accessed (for external viewing only) complete with history board detailing the exploits of early mineral exploration. Passing by the mineshaft is the rather picturesque silver mine river which empties into the Connecticut River in a small sand delta. Parcel 1 provides an opportunity for hikers and nature enthusiasts to view an untamed section of riverbank, which was lost when Route 9 and Harbor Park were constructed in downtown Middletown. In addition there are numerous summer and winter views across the river, in the direction of Great Hill Mountain.

#### **Parcel 2: Duck Hill Parcel**

The new trail would continue along open field areas with a swath of secondary tree growth (passing Pin Oaks Grove State Facility) into the area of Duck Hill where large alluvial conglomerates can be seen, a relic of the ice age that passed through Maromas. This area is primarily second growth with Native American Holly trees share the hill with Black Cherry and Black Birch. There are mature trees (maples and oaks) interspersed with the secondary growth, typically left by farmers when in a fence line or a non-farmable patch of rocky ground was avoided.

#### **Parcel 3: Indian Hill I (north)**

The Indian Hill Parcel has both woods and fields. There is an extensive stand of "cedars" that vary in age from 20-50 years of age and create an idyllic scene with numerous deer trails meandering along the forest floor, surrounded by moss gardens and fern glades. Native high bush blueberries abound in the understory along with ancient apple trees, a remnant of its farming history.

#### **Parcel 4: Indian Hill II (south)**

This parcel is primarily composed of fields with a small portion still wooded. With an overabundance of field and forest margins, there is ample opportunity for the hiker to witness both wildlife and abundant flora (especially tree and wildflower varieties). It is from this parcel at the southeast corner (see map 1) that the trail would then cut over to the preexisting Mattabesett trail, near the southern border of Asylum Reservoir No.1. Careful

attention to the margins of the reservoir would need to be considered, in order to maintain water quality. Hikers could then follow the Mattabesett trail for approximately 0.7 miles and then cut west over to Parcel 5 for an additional loop.

**Parcel 5: Quarry**

This parcel borders mature forest from the Cockaponset State Forest on its southern side. These forests are impressive for any hiker or naturalist with their mature stands of Tulip Trees, Big-Toothed Aspens, and Chestnut Oaks. The understory abounds with Mountain Laurel and would be a breathtaking scene when flowering. Interspersed with the laurel is Witch Hazel, Ironwood trees (Hornbeam) and Stripped Maple trees with its bright green and white-stripped bark. The trail would travel near a remarkable stream that has several small stepped waterfalls that may have been the masonry project of a CVH patient from years past. The hiking trail would then continue west up the slope to several rocky outcroppings of granite adjacent to the old quarry that sits next to Toll Gate Road. It is unclear from the aerial photos taken in 1934 vs. 1996, if the land adjacent to the quarry is still within this parcel. The trail could circle around to connect with the trail back to the established Mattabesett Trail and continue south, toward Bear Hill and Haddam and eventually to points north in Massachusetts.

**IV. Expected Costs to Establish Trail System and Informational Kiosks\*:**

Cutting and Establishment of 5 miles of Maromas trails within Parcels 1-5:

Initial mapping, cutting and clearing of trail with Blue Trail signs & blazes.....	\$5,000.00
Maintenance of Blue Trails (volunteers) .....	\$0.00

\*Costs associated with informational kiosks would vary depending upon the # of kiosks but they would be fairly inexpensive to install and maintain.

**V. Benefits of Proposed Hiking Trails:**

1.) Hiking trails offer accessibility to all visitors, while providing historical kiosks detailing the background on historic areas of Maromas, Middletown. Kiosks could be constructed that detail the role of silver/lead mining in the area, the use of land by the patients at CVH (growing food for the hospital in years past), abandoned mill sites, stone walls, along with masonry work constructed on stream watercourses that was utilized as a form of therapy for patients. Hiking Trails combined with informational kiosks educate the community at large regarding the history of Maromas as a vital component of Middletown.

2.) Fields can still be leased by farmers for hay, and tree farms as a means to generate income. As noted in the Land Use Study of Transferred State Property Document (March 2007), many of these fields are considered "Prime Farmland" and/or "Additional Farmland of State Significance" based on their soil composition. By proposing hiking trails, the town would not be taking away farmland from future farming practices, but rather maintaining the

status quo, allowing farming to continue on those open fields or with the possibility of additional farming practices in the future.

3.) Wildlife habitat for rare and endangered flora and fauna is abundant in these parcels (Eastern Box Turtle, Rattlesnake Plantain Orchid, and others). Maromas is part of the north-south Bolton Range flyway from Manchester to Guilford, and natural resource studies have identified many features in Maromas worthy of protection.

4.) Incorporates the wetlands into the hiking regime without altering the current wetland distribution. Wetlands are valuable for maintaining stable water tables for local residents in regard to flooding. In addition, hikers who are birders, dragonfly enthusiasts, and overall flora and fauna naturalists, value wetland areas.

5.) The trail system would have a low environmental impact on the land with only basic hand tools required to maintain recreational activities on the trails.

6.) There would be low overhead costs to implement proposal and maintain the property.

7.) Blue Trails provide recreation for a variety of visitors in different socio-economic groups (no fee, open to all).

8.) By connecting to downtown Middletown, hikers using the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System can utilize local businesses for needed services (cafes, restaurants, merchandise shopping, etc.). Or, information can be provided at trailheads regarding area restaurants, shops, etc.

9.) At regional meetings regarding the National Scenic Trail, the need for places to camp has been mentioned. As a starting/end point of the Trail, it would be logical for through-hikers to stay in local inns/hotels/bed & breakfasts, eat at local restaurants, etc.

## VI. Summation:

Hiking trails provide an invaluable recreational activity for Middletown residents and visitors alike. The establishment of a trail system is a low cost but significant gain for the town, without having substantial overhead and maintenance costs. During these sobering economic times, more people are utilizing low cost recreational activities that provide physical fitness along with educational aspects in regard to nature excursions.

Hiking trails within these parcels add long term value to Middletown in ways that are difficult to measure but “cash in” on the local beauty of the Maromas area. These land parcels are a mosaic of woodlands, hay fields, and wetlands. By proposing hiking trails, the integrity of the land will be maintained in regard to the vital wetlands and preserve the potential to tap into the designated “prime farmland” at a later time.

Despite the location of Middletown along the banks of the Connecticut River, there are few options currently to walk along the river and take-in the wild riparian experience. Trails along the riverbanks in Parcel 1 would afford this unique hiking experience. And as the

hiker continues into the southernmost parcel (Parcel 5), they would have the advantage of viewing river edge habitat as it transforms into a more mature woodland setting with towering Chestnut Oak and Tulip Tree coupled with an open understory for the mountain laurels that grace our state emblem.

VII. Map of proposed trail, with connections to New England National Scenic Trail.

