

P.O. Box 435 - 49 Sims Lane  
East Haddam, CT 06423  
September 10, 2005

Senator Christopher Dodd  
100 Great Meadow Road  
Wethersfield, CT 06109

Dear Senator Dodd,

Thanks to the alertness of Barbara McCredie of your Wethersfield office, I have a copy of Mr. Martinez' July 19 letter written to you defending Connecticut Audubon's decision to sell the Harlo Haagenson Preserve in East Haddam to a private buyer. This same letter has been sent to two other people in our conservation group, as well as being emailed to CAS members by CAS Board Chair Barbara Strickland (copy enclosed), so it must be their latest and best effort.

While the issue(s) is in the hands of Attorney Blumenthal, it is important for us to realize that many of Mr. Martinez' statements are questionable. In this letter, I would like to concentrate on a particular passage near the end of his letter which appears to indicate a shift in Ct. Audubon's stance regarding the purpose of the land sale. It gives us a fleeting glimpse of hope toward resolving the situation.

Getting right into it, Mr. Martinez states: "We (CAS) will consider a private buyer to raise sufficient funds to permanently endow most of the parcel as a wildlife sanctuary." This is the first indication that CAS' objective is simply to endow this specific preserve, not to create funds for the organization's shortfall of general funding. If Mr. Martinez really means this, this is looking more like a solvable problem.

First, in 1989, CAS stated that they were willing to "...take our chances" regarding the possibility of raising endowment funds by selling two conforming lots. If they could not, they would accept the donated land anyway. In short, endowment funds were nice but not required. Not required, as in there is no absolute necessity to sell any portion of the preserve - none.

Second, if any land sale is deemed desirable, it really does not have to become a significant event. Why? Because the annual costs of carrying this 57 acre preserve is fairly modest. According to the CAS' own 2004 tax return, the funding required for "maintenance" was \$8,974 total for 19 sites. Dividing directly, the cost is less than \$700 per sanctuary. Yes, this is a simplification. CAS has been asked by the Friends of Haagenson Preserve to substantiate their "carrying costs" over the last 16 years (as part of our offer to buy the preserve by reimbursing them their costs to date), but there has been no response. Regardless, the annual cost is modest. It does not require a sale of land. And, other sources are available, as in Gus and Peggy Carlson could donate \$700 for the first year. Or, thinking of it this way, a \$100,00 sale of a lot or two would support 142 years of expenses. Why, may we ask, is the asking price \$775,000?

However, it really is not this simple. Mr. Martinez' letter goes on to say, "...this sale of land would be predicated unequivocally on the establishment of one home replacing the original...the vast majority of land will be preserved in perpetuity."

This statement is confusing. It appears to contradict the thought that enough money for an endowment is all that's sought. Anyone familiar with this site knows that the original house occupied the highest promontory with wide views of the Connecticut River valley, north to south, an open field of the most critical and sensitive habitat, at the heart of the entire preserve. This portion of the site is at its center, and it is "unequivocally" for sale. This would be a conservation disaster, and it would contradict the donor's intentions. Mr. Haagenon had envisioned his home (which was demolished by CAS) on that site, to be a nature center or meeting place for the whole preserve, and had only agreed to the sale of two perimeter lots to serve as an endowment for the property.

Why does Mr. Martinez insist on this sale? It can be speculated that the notion of a sale eventually worth some \$500,000 (asking price: \$775,000) would somehow result in money finding its way into the CAS' general funds. Does Mr. Martinez realize that the State Attorney General's Office of Public Charities will be monitoring the dispersion of money from such a large land deal? And has anyone thought of what kind of site is left if a trophy house is built on the highest and most central site, with the remainder ("the vast majority" - say, 50 acres) surrounds it? A private occupant surrounded by publicly used sanctuary? This is not good for either party.

We can hope that Mr. Martinez' thinking is in some kind of inconsistent transition zone. He appears to believe he must say he will limit the sale of land to endowment funding, yet he still holds onto the \$500,000 sale only the top of the hill will provide. This is where someone of Senator Dodd's influence should enter, helping CAS find its way. The situation is tippy, it appears uncertainty is at the helm.

Now is the moment to influence the outcome. All players ought to direct their energies toward achieving the donor's intent. It is clearly stated in the lawyers' letters of 1989 that the land was donated on a restricted basis. Two conforming lots (zoned R1, which means 1 acre is conforming) to endow this specific property, the remaining land to be devoted to sanctuary. Any reasonable man can conclude that the intent was not to sell the heart of the preserve privately for \$775,000 and ring it with a sanctuary for public use, particularly when the resulting windfall must be earmarked for this land's modest carrying costs.

Sincerely,

Gustaf B. Carlson

cc: Attorney General Blumenthal  
Friends of Haagenon Preserve