Former 4-H camp bought by Getaway, cabin rental company

By Russell Shaddox

The site of the former Middlesex County Camp has been bought by Getaway, a vacation cabin rental company with properties throughout the country. First Selectman Rob Smith has announced.

The 90-acre property on Route 149 has been unused since last year.

"Having a tax-paying business coming to town that will be taking advantage of all East Haddam has to offer, while at the same time having little to no impact on the Town's rural character, is a win-win for the Town," Smith said.

Since its inception in 1962, the Middlesex County Camp had operated in conjunction with the 4-H program, offering a variety of recreational and camping activities for young people from 7 to 17 years old. Despite community support and efforts to revamp programming, low registration and financial pressures finally overtook the camp in August 2019, when it ceased operations.

The property's buyer, Getaway, is a Brooklyn-based company established in 2015. It owns wooded properties within two hours of major metropolitan areas including New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and Houston. The company rents tiny custom-built cabins — less than 200 square feet — on those properties for stays averaging about 1.3 days in length. Campers in their 20s and 30s make up about two-thirds of the company's customers.

The company is currently performing engineering work at the East Haddam property. They plan to have 40 to 50 custom tiny cabins on the property, said Getaway representative Nico Turek, adding: "We hope to be open sometime in spring 2021."

Smith said, "When the Getaway folks first called about the property and inquired about what attractions were here, they were blown away by the recreation activities virtually a short walk from the site. The deal-closer, I believe, was the hundred miles of nearby hiking trails; lakes, rivers and streams for fishing."

The Middlesex County Camp is in an area that will be taking advantage of all East Haddam has to offer, he said. "The impact on the Town's rural character, is a win-win for the Town." Smith said.

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Commissions urge purchase of airport if possible

By Danielle Faipler

The East Haddam Economic Development Commission held a joint meeting Thursday, September 3, with the Planning and Zoning Commission and Goodspeed Airport Evaluation Committee to discuss potential uses of the airport and how it fits into the town’s plan of conservation.

“We want to open [the airport] up to everyone in this town to be able to get to the river,” said Economic Development Commission Chair Bob Casner during the meeting.

“The biggest thing we can do is get people coming to that area … and we’re going to build our economic base, and what we’ve been hearing about what [the developers] want to do in Goodspeed area, we’re going to create something here that is going to be an attraction.”

Casner added the property could be an asset to the town and has potential to attract tourism and generate revenue.

Economic Development Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission members echoed Casner’s sentiment, but also questioned the probability of restarting negotiations with Timothy Mellon, owner of the airport, since a deal is already in the works for a private party to purchase the airport.

“I think it’s a perfect area for development,” said Planning and Zoning Commission Chair Crary Brownell, highlighting the existing sewer infrastructure as well as water supply across the Connecticut River. “I think it would be a win-win if we could get this, but right now everything is at a standstill. We could make all the plans we like, but I think the first thing we would need to do is to restart negotiations.”

Casner said the town is determining if it should pursue the purchase of the airport. If the town chooses to move forward, it can create a framework to make an offer to Mellon that could include tax incentives.

Due to the time constraints, the town would have to quickly develop a proposal that covers financing of the purchase. As stated during the meeting, the private sale is 85 percent completed.

“The town could also make an offer to Mellon as a backup if the private sale falls through.

“I think we need to show some intent, and the quicker the better or we’re going to miss this,” said EDC member Donald Bergeron. He added that if consensus exists among the committees, they should draft a letter to the Board of Selectmen with their recommendation to purchase the airport.

Towards the end of the joint meeting, members of the Planning and Zoning Commission decided it would draft a letter encouraging the town to move forward in the process and include information on the potential uses and zoning for the Goodspeed Airport Evaluation Committee in its final report.

Upon adjourning the joint meeting, the Economic Development Commission convened for its regular meeting and motioned to draft a letter to the Board of Selectmen recommending the purchase of the airport and to draft a letter notifying the Goodspeed Airport Evaluation Committee of the letter sent to the selectmen.

The motion passed unanimously.

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Former 4–H camp bought by Getaway

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paddling; bird watching in the Lyme Important Bird Area and the historic homes and generally bucolic setting. Adding the Goodspeed, Valley Railroad, and the many other attractions was just the icing on the cake.

Operating the cabins year-round would require the Planning and Zoning Commission to amend the town’s zoning regulations, said Smith. According to the regulations, a recreational camp or campground is only allowed from April 15 to October 31.

Getaway made national business news in 2017 when its principals walked away from an offer from angel investor Chris Sacca on ABC’s “Shark Tank.” After the show aired, interest in the company skyrocketed, with website visits increasing a hundredfold.

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Editor's note: For more on this story, see “Zoning board objects after remarks by official at vigil” on page one of the September 3 issue of the East Haddam News (online at easthaddamnews.org).

A response to Planning and Zoning Commission objection

Reaction to the zoning board’s objection:

Our community knows you, as individuals, didn’t write the rules in place. But as a board, to now know that there could be those rules written, and then refuse to go back to rewrite them, is ignorance and perpetuates the bias. At a different rally held by Rhea DeStefano, there were discussions from people on the panel about how these long-standing writs affect society today. Brendan Saunders is a Republican running for state Senate, and he sat on that panel underscoring these historical biases affecting people of color. Please stop taking this personally, like you personally are responsible for these rules being written. Instead say, “I sit on a board and see where we can make improvements to our writings to reflect fairness and equality to everyone.” Liberty and justice for ALL.

When we sit on a board with the power and authority to make changes, and choose not to — when we are made aware of these historical wrongs and choose to ignore them — we send a bigger and more ominous message to the next generation: It doesn’t matter. That is the legacy we leave to our children, to leave the place better than we started. Let’s be certain we don’t have these policies in our system so there is no reason to call out and cast light on issues. Let’s reflect that doing the right thing is the way we want our children to grow up and learn from us. Let’s leave them a legacy of change for good and fairness for all. This is not personal, this is ethical. Respectfully submitted,

Laurel White
East Haddam Land Trust

Land Trust seeks help in caring for town’s natural resources

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The gypsy moths, emerald ash borers, and storms have not been kind to our woods. However, we are very happy that our hiking trails continue to provide users with opportunities for exercise, the examination of the flora and fauna, quiet time, and bird watching. But with increased usage comes increased need for trail maintenance.

East Haddam Land Trust’s efforts to maintain our trails have stretched our available resources — both financially and in volunteer hours. Please email pres- ident@ehlt.org if you would like to join our steward- ship crew. You do not need to use a chain saw — we need folks to drag brush, clear debris from the trails, and use loppers and rakes. And we require our crew to mask up.

When using our trails, please remember that trail conditions can quickly change as a result of the weather. Please be very aware of your surroundings. If you see a problem, please take a picture and email to trail.monitor@ehlt.org.

If you are unable to physically help, our all-volun- teer land trust always appreciates donations to offset the costs of maintenance projects too large for our volunteer crews. You can donate at www.ehlt.org or by mail to East Haddam Land Trust, P.O. Box 122, East Haddam, CT 06423.

Pete Gove rt
President, East Haddam Land Trust

Missing cat

Dusty, a large black cat, has been missing since July 30 from his Clark Gates Road home in Moodus. He has medium length hair, is neutered, friendly and microchipped, and was wearing an army-green collar when he went missing. Dusty’s owner has posted on social media and contacted shelters and veterinarians without success. If you have any information that might help, please call Megan at 860-338-9091.

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Lions project installs commemorative tiles at town hall building

The East Haddam Community Lions Tile Project has installed the first tiles on the 4-foot brick wall at the Municipal Office Building Complex. The organization urges visitors to stop by and take a look.

The laser etched tiles purchased by community members echo the Lions’ project slogan: “Leave your Mark. Create a Legacy.”


Many tiles commemorate alumni of Nathan Hale-Ray High School, which occupied the building for many years.

The tiles also create a legacy — all monies, beyond direct expenses for materials and labor, go into the Community Lions high school ScholarFund. Every year, the Community Lions award scholarships for East Haddam graduates that have demonstrated both academic achievement and a commitment to community service during their school tenure. This year, two $2,000 scholarships were awarded.

Those interested may still purchase a tile — the display has room for more tiles to be installed. The price of a 4x8-inch laser-engraved tile is $100. A 4x4-inch laser-engraved tile is $75. The larger tile holds three lines with up to 23 characters per line; the smaller tile holds three lines with up to 12 characters per line.

For more information on ordering a tile, please contact Tile Project Chair Stu Palmer at 349srpalm@gmail.com.

TriCircle memorial quilt honors victims of substance use

The TriCircle, Inc. 1st Memorial Quilt will be put on display from 1 to 8 p.m. at the Charity Challenge Music Fest on Saturday, September 12, at Saint David’s Episcopal Church, 284 Stoddards Wharf Road, Gales Ferry. The announce ment was made by Ana Gop oian, founder and executive director of TriCircle. The memorial quilt, the first in a planned series, was crafted to create an opportunity for individuals and families to come together to remember and memorialize loved ones in a supportive and caring environment. TriCircle previously displayed the quilt in Wallingford and Hartford, and it plans to continue displaying the quilt throughout the state in an effort to reduce stigma and create meaningful conversations about substance use. “[We hope] that by putting the faces of those who have died in the forefront, we will reinforce the need to create long term solutions and make the valuable changes necessary to improve the system of care and recovery,” said a release from the organization.

The Charity Challenge Music Fest features five bands as well as food and beverage vendors. TriCircle will host a “Safe Space” at the event, which will provide nonalcoholic beverages and sell balloons with a chance to win prizes. The space will be marked with yellow balloons. Admission to the event is $20 per person and limited to 150 attendees. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit the website: www.thecharitychallenge.net/2020MusicFestHolidayGiftDrive.html

For those struggling with substance use, TriCircle offers Hope & Support groups throughout the region, including sessions in East Haddam. The local sessions take place at Two Wrasslin’ Cats Coffee House, 374 Town St., from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on the last Wednesday of every month.
EcoFan AirMax heat powered large woodstove fan, Excellent Condition. Asking $1,500. 860-873-1693.

2007 Suzuki DR-200, On/Off Road, 1,300 miles. (9/10)

Mitten Sentry vinyl siding. Double 4” Horizontal. 860-670-0698. (9/24)

cdkayak.com, New $1,900. Asking $1,100. Call Dan, includes cockpit covers and paddles. website: rotomolded polyethylene kayak. Like-new condition. (9/24)


2007 Suzuki DR-200, On/Off Road, 1,300 miles. Excellent Condition. Asking $1,500. 860-873-1693. (9/10)

EcoFan AirMax heat powered large woodstove fan, gold blades, excellent condition, like new. Asking $75 cash. Call 860-917-3960. (9/10)

Ryobi power washer, 2700psi power washer, 2.3GPM, used twice, $190, OBO, call Vince at 203-927-5744. (9/10)

Free

Free: Craftsman 42” inch lawnmower for parts, (860) 873-9623. (9/24)

Howard baby grand piano: probably needs tuning, great to display photos, hold large bowl with flowers or greens in it. You could also learn to play it! 860-575-7425. (9/10)

I have a Electone organ with foot board pedals and all the bells & whistles. It was the original property of East Haddam High School. Still in great condition. Call Robert at 860-334 2135. Great for that young budding musician. (9/17)

Wanted

Hand-pump well in need of repair. Our circa 1938 hand-pump well on our property is not working, and I am looking for estimates to repair it. The hand pump lever and steel well casing are located within a small fieldstone enclosure with a roof, and it is a novelty from the past I would really like to get working again. The hand pump lever operates, but it does not pump any water. Please contact John at (860) 873-2978 or jsnatale@att.net. (9/24)

Mature couple (no kids, no pets, no smoking) looking to rent an affordable two-bedroom house year-round. We would like a September move-in date. We will take good care of your house. Call 860-873-2978 or jsnatale@att.net. (9/10)

Jazz & rock LP records: that young budding musician. (9/17)

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Jazz & rock LP records: that young budding musician. (9/17)
Traveling photographer’s favorite place? The next one he visits

Continued from page EH1

He earned a master’s in economics at New York University and has served as a senior economist for Texaco and as a partner in two prestigious consulting firms, Booz Allen Hamilton and Anderson Consulting, now known as Accenture.

“It’s been a lot of fun,” he said of his work. “Managing, consulting, there was always something new. But there was more to enjoy.” “I got to travel all over the world,” he said. Viscio has spent time in South America, Australia, Central America, Asia, Europe, Africa and Antarctica. “I was in the top 50 travelers in terms of mileage on United Airlines,” he said.

He continued to travel for business but stopped extending his trips to take photos in 1990 when his first son was born. “I had to stop,” he said. “I wanted to come home on weekends.” He stopped traveling almost completely when their sons were about 10 and 12 and returned to photography on a limited basis in 2007 and “with purpose” in 2018.

He has photos from all over the world, including the Milky Way shot from a desert in Turkey, and his favorite, Godafoss, a waterfall in Iceland, illuminated by moonlight with the northern lights glowing in the background.

Viscio hasn’t sold any photos, although he said people have asked him about it. He’s had one exhibit, at the Rathbun Memorial Library earlier this year. He said that came about because Nathan Wise, an old friend who lives in Old Saybrook, convinced him that his photos should be shown. Viscio and Wise met in kindergarten and drifted apart after graduating from high school; at their 50th reunion, they discovered they now live about 20 minutes apart.

“We started to have lunch together occasionally at Town Tavern in East Haddam and another tavern in Old Saybrook, and he told me of his travels to exotic places like Patagonia, Costa Rica, and the Dolomites in Italy,” Wise said. “He showed me his photos on his iPhone, a blue turtle from the Costa Rican rainforest, the Milky Way seen from the southernmost tip of South America, an owl, a hummingbird, a toucan, a breaching whale, and I said, ‘You have to share these with the world!’ It wasn’t just the quality of the photos, which were crystal clear; it was his eye for beauty and the wonder and respect he had for Nature.”

“I suggested he mount his photos and approached his public library about a possible exhibition, and the rest is history. We liked each other from the start, K-12 together in a small town in New York in 1955, and who knew we’d end up (in our dotage) as friends for life? Sometimes you never know about these fortuitous connections. When we started talking over lunch, I realized what a great thinker he is, and how much I just enjoyed getting to know him again.”

Now retired, Viscio continues to expand his horizons, geographically and photographically. “The thing about life for me is the new things you can do,” he said. “You want to collect experiences.”

A sailboat shines in the midnight sun at Disko Bay, Greenland. Photos by Albert Viscio Jr.

A gentoo penguin in Antarctica.

A caracara, a member of the falcon family, hunts in Patagonia.
Hector Estuardo Lavarreda

Hector Estuardo Lavarreda, 52, of East Haddam, passed away suddenly on August 26. Born September 14, 1967, in Guatemala, he was a son of Eluvia (Mejia) Lavarreda and the late Edgar Lavarreda. Hector was a man whose life could not fit in a book with a million pages, much less a few paragraphs in an obituary. But if we were to summarize his life with a word, it would be “compassion.” It seems trivial and clichéd to say it, but the truth is that Hector was the embodiment of compassion—not just simple kindness, but compassion. He had a way of taking care of everyone—including strangers—that surpassed regular benevolence.

Hector was the first to anonymously buy families Thanksgiving dinners and outrageously tip waiters, and he was the last to leave a party to make sure everyone got home. Hector worked endlessly to provide for his family, making sure we wanted for nothing. Cars, vacations, school tuitions, pets—he was more than a father. He was our “slowpoke hero.”

Hector built himself from the ground up, having come from Guatemala, and made himself a beautiful life with three kids and a wife. Determination, grit, fortitude—all of these words paint a picture of Hector’s life, but only a fragment. Amongst his drive to work and achieve was a softer, brighter side of him—a side only seen by his family. Hector loved wine and fish, he loved nature photography and silly comedy. Hector planted flowers and fed hummingbirds; he ate ice cream by the gallon and most amusingly, burnt his grill every year. In closing, Hector was more than a father and a husband. Hector was a dreamer, an achiever, a man against all odds. He took care of his family, his mother, his brother, and complete strangers with a diligence that no regular human could ever compete with.

On that note, we would like to finish with one of his favorite sayings, “Crack two eggs over it, ch ch!” He will be forever loved and remembered by his wife Jackie (Keating) Lavarreda of East Haddam; his children Jack Lavarreda of East Haddam, and Claire Elizabeth and Daniella Lavarreda of East Haddam; His mother Eluvia of Guatemala; his brother Alejandro of Guatemala, sister Maria Luisa Lavarreda of New York; his second parents Marie and Robert Valenti of New York; and numerous extended family and friends. Care of private arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made to the Maya Educational Foundation: (https://mayaedufound.org/)

HONOR ROLL

Michael Orfao of East Haddam earned a bachelor of arts degree from Western Governors University. His major was special education.

Leah Brownell, Cassidy Corey, Zachary Corey, and Hannah Denette, all of East Haddam, were named to the spring 2020 dean’s list at Roger Williams University. Full-time students who complete 12 or more credits per semester and earn a grade-point average of 3.4 or higher are noted.

In addition, two East Haddam students received their degrees in May as part of the class of 2020 at Roger Williams University. Leah Brownell graduated with a bachelor of science degree in architecture. Madison Demais graduated with a bachelor of science degree in Mathematics.

Eliza Baker and Anthony Saraco of East Haddam and Caralyn Cianciolo, Ethan Cumminskey, and Joshua Greenberg of Moodus were among the students recently graduating from the University of New Haven.

Isaac Martin Waide of East Haddam completed studies recently at Hartwick College.

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