



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

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OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
Wednesday December 2, 2020
4:30 P.M.

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Call to Order

1. Public Audience
2. Approval of Minutes
 - September 2, 2020 (Revised)
 - November 4, 2020
3. Policies Work Group Update
 - Model Agricultural Lease and RFP
 - Other
4. Updates
 - Status of Potential Meadowood Acquisition
 - Status of Disposition of Holcomb Street Parcel

Adjourn

Open Space Committee
Wednesday, September 2, 2020
4:30PM- Via Zoom Video Conference
REGUALR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

PRESENT: Eric Wellman, Margery Winters, Susan Masino, Helen Peterson, David Bush, Bill Rice

ALSO PRESENT: Maria Capriola, Town Manager, Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation, Tom Fitzgerald, Management Specialist, and Code Compliance Officer, Tom Hazel, were also in attendance.

Absent: Anne Erickson, Tim Walczak

Call to Order

Mr. Wellman called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM

1.) Public Audience

No public audience.

2.) Approval of Minutes

Ms. Peterson commented to the fact that “commission” and “committee” are used simultaneously in the minutes. The minutes will be reflected to show “committee” instead of “commission”. The Commission members voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 1, 2020 and July 17, 2020 meetings as presented.

3.) Updates (Oral Reports)

Parks and Open Space Master Plan – Mr. Tyburski reported that additional comments were submitted following the joint meeting in July to Sampson & Biggs, and he received a revised document on Friday. The anticipated presentation to the Board of Selectmen is October 26th.

Status of Potential Disposition of Holcomb Street Parcel– Ms. Capriola reported that the BOS held a second public hearing in August on the matter, about 10-15 comments were received at the second public hearing. The comments of the second hearing were more so in favor of the disposition. Ms. Masino clarified that those in favor at the second hearing were signed onto a common letter, whereas at the first public hearing there were many opposed. At the first hearing there were two letters in favor but one common letter with many signatures against the disposition as well as a couple dozen individual letters that were also not in favor of the disposition.

The Board of Selectmen did not take action at that meeting and are processing all the information heard. The topic will be on the September agenda. Ms. Masino stated that she is not in favor of this for a few reasons but did appreciate the additional information provided at the second meeting. Ms. Peterson also shared the sentiments that it is not the appropriate thing to do for the Town.

Pollinator Pathway Program Possible Grants– Ms. Masino shared that Sustainable CT has a grant matching program. Ms. Masino stated that the projects can be up to 30K and they now have a new energy one that can be up to 50K. You have to raise half of what your goal is and you have to get 20 different donors to contribute to make sure there is community support and involvement for the project.

4.) Policies/Policies Work Group

- a. **Natural Stewardship Policy** – Ms. Masino shared a document she pulled together as a simple overview of what would be the approach and philosophy for a natural area that doesn't need intervention. The goal of the document is to provide basic information and answers to frequently asked questions on Natural Area Stewardship. Currently, less than 5% of Southern New England is under Natural Stewardship and only a small fraction is legally protected as such. The benefits of Natural Area Stewardship were discussed. Ms. Masino shared that it may be useful to consider this a living document and that it was reviewed by several public policy people and ecologists.

Ms. Winters stated that she thinks the document is fantastic and is above and beyond what the Town has for management plans.

Ms. Peterson inquired if the document could actively be incorporated into the tools needed for the Committee.

Mr. Bush stated that the term “natural area stewardship” is used and it says that “any and all part of any forest”, he questioned if the committee envisions identifying the parcels in Town that might be coming with this umbrella. Ms. Masino stated that Belden would definitely be a natural opportunity for this. She would suggest that based on the new information about the Eastern Wild Way, Onion Mountain would be a place for this, or at least part of it along with Ethel Walker Woods. Ms. Masino also stated that the document is flexible.

Mr. Bush stated that before we adopt the toolbox, we need to know what tools are going into the toolbox. He also stated that since the plan will be a living document, he would like to at least have a parameter of what properties generally fit in it.

Ms. Masino agreed with Mr. Bush stating that, it cannot assumed to be the controlling document, it would be something that would specifically be applied to certain properties that we feel it fits and she would suggest initially to just pick the low-hanging fruit and then maybe pick some more as we go along. She would see this working in conjunction with the updated agricultural lease.

Mr. Wellman recommended to complete the work as soon as possible at the subcommittee level and then share the document in the next Open Space packet so the

87 public will have the opportunity to provide any input and then it can be discussed
88 before adopting as a group.

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90 Ms. Capriola stated that the Town's graduate intern would help organize the
91 subcommittee meeting and then gather the feedback for the subcommittee.

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93 **b. Disposition of Open Space Policy**

94 **c. Other**

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96 Ms. Masino shared that after the project started at Massacoe people contacted them that this is an
97 error that the core forest Ethel Walker Woods and this connector is not on the Eastern Wildway,
98 although it was just published in 2019. They have now fixed the error and we are now officially on the
99 Wildway. They are still doing their citizens science work Friday mornings at 9a.m at 150 Nimrod Road.

100
101 Ms. Masino shared that the 350 Committee is creating a medallion, an artist in MA helped design it. She
102 shared the design with the Committee. The goal is to have them sold online and available for pickup at
103 the outdoor movie at Simsbury Meadows on September 12.

104
105 **ADJOURN**

106 Ms. Winters made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Bush. All voted in favor. Motion
107 passed. Meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.

108
109 Respectfully submitted,

110 Heather Taylor

111 Committee Clerk

Open Space Committee
Wednesday, November 4, 2020
4:30PM- Via Zoom Video Conference
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

PRESENT: Margery Winters, Susan Masino, David Bush, Tim Walczak, and Bill Rice.

ALSO PRESENT: Maria Capriola, Town Manager, Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation, Tom Fitzgerald, Management Specialist, Mike Glidden, Planning Director and Zoning Compliance Officer, Tom Hazel, were also in attendance.

Absent: Anne Erickson, Helen Peterson

Call to Order

Ms. Winters called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM

1. Public Audience
No public audience.

2. Approval of Minutes
Mr. Bush made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 2, 2020 and October 7, 2020 minutes as presented. Mr. Rice seconded the motion. The Commission members voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

3. 2021 Meeting Schedule
Ms. Winters stated that the 2021 meeting schedule is the first Wednesday of every month at 4:30 p.m. Ms. Masino made a motion to accept the 2021 meeting schedule as submitted. Mr. Bush seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

4. Updates

Status of Potential Meadowood Acquisition- Ms. Capriola reported that they are still putting together additional information that the Board of Finance members have requested. They are also working on some follow-up requests in regards to the appraisal that was conducted, as well as some additional appraisal work that the Board of Finance requested. They have also been working on getting a good handle on the status of the barns on the property, as well as any grant opportunities that may be available for the restoration of the barns. They have also had some private donors interested as well.

Mr. Bush asked if the Town would be able to intervene if it looks like a barn is starting to do down, as the Town does not own that property. Mr. Glidden stated that Mr. Miga, the Town's building official, can intervene and say it must be secured or removed because it is a safety hazard.

Status of Disposition of Holcomb Street Parcel - Ms. Capriola shared that they are still negotiating with the property owner of the Old Well property in regards to the easement, as well as the disposition, The Town attorney is optimistic that a tentative agreement can be reached, the plan is to present it to the Board of Selectmen on November 9. Once it goes in the packet, it is public information, however, what they are working is still confidential.

5. Policies/Policies Work Group

a. **Natural Stewardship Policy** –Ms. Winters shared that this policy is ready to go, they are just working on nailing down the exact location/name of the other properties. A document was sent out by Mr. Hazel today to identify those properties. Ms. Masino commented that one edit to the policy is that under point C, it says “services” and it should read “stewardship”. She stated that the policy doesn’t explicitly say it but it doesn’t prevent trails or ban anything, it is just setting up a strategy for how we are setting up pieces of land. Ms. Capriola stated that she thinks that at this point the policy is in very good shape and could advance to the Board of Selectmen for final consideration. If everyone feels comfortable with the three additional properties as well as the original four along, with the policy language, then it can move to the Board of Selectmen for final consideration. The additional properties were discussed including Stafford Road, Sponzo property (owned by Simsbury), Gersten property (Mountain Road in Tariffville), Onion Mountain Park (which was already included), Darling-Hilles property, and Sugar Loaf Cut. Ms. Capriola stated that since there is a rental home on this property, if in fact this property is referenced in the policy, maybe add a note to reference something like “except for routine maintenance associated with the yard around the home.” Mr. Hazel will amend the document to attach Ethel Walker Woods and Belden Forest and re-send to the committee. Ms. Masino commented that there is an area of Ethel Walker Woods that is from a donor, it’s about a 10 acre piece that was supposed to be a meadow that should be another set-aside. Mr. Hazel stated that as he did with the Stafford Road description, he will try to include it with the description as a separate unit. Mr. Bush made a motion to submit the parcels as amended adding Belden Forest and Ethel Walker Woods to be subject to the natural stewardship policy. Ms. Masino seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

b. **Model Agricultural Lease and RFP**-Ms. Winters stated that they will bring this matter forward to the full committee after the next subcommittee as they are waiting on the model town lease. Ms. Winters stated at the subcommittee meeting it was discussed to have a 5 year rolling lease and a very simple application form, discussion was also had about who would be the ones to review the farm leases, proposing that perhaps the open space committee would be the ones to do that. Ms. Capriola stated that there is a farmer that intends to not renew their lease that ends in January so this provides a good opportunity to establish a good model RFP and then a good model lease so the most pressing matter would be getting a good model RFP into shape as that would be very helpful and then once a farmer has been selected we’ll be able to move forward with the new model lease.

c. **Pollinator Pathway Program, Possible Grants** – Ms. Masino shared that the sustainability grant she wants to do is for the little ecology trail that she’s been talking to Tootin’ Hills about, it will mostly be an information board and most of information will be online, she is excited for the push button on the board with animal recordings.

d. **Acquisition Criteria**- Ms. Winters stated that the acquisition criteria consisted of bullet points for the acquisition of open space, which was previously discussed at the Open Space meeting last January. Ms. Winters said that it is ready to go to the Board of Selectmen once approved by this committee, it will be included in the next packet for the next meeting.

ADJOURN

Mr. Walczak made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Bush. All voted in favor. The motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Taylor
Committee Clerk