

Open Space Stewardship & Policies Work Group

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

4:30 PM- Via Zoom

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

PRESENT: Margery Winters, Karyn Cordner, Susan Masino

ALSO PRESENT: Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation was also in attendance.

Call to Order

Ms. Winters called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

1. Approval of February 7, 2024 Minutes

A correction was made to the agenda as it should be the approval of the March 6, 2024 minutes not February 7, 2024. The minutes were approved as presented.

2. Presentation of Simsbury High School Student Capstone Project

Ms. Masino shared that they were contacted by a high school student regarding a capstone project in the community. She shared that there is a little trail system nestled in the neighborhood in between Red Oak Court, Aspen Wood and near Straton Brook and Sand Hill Road. Some of the trails are not in great shape. The student would like to do a report about it and try to work on it. Ms. Masino and Mr. Tyburski had a meeting with the student. She shared the only problems with the property right now are a little bit of litter, some invasives, and some run-down water crossings. The plan is for the student to do work between now and October. In order to fix the bridges, he would have to come to the conservation/wetlands commissions. They could see if this would be a good invasive project to get it in good shape. They will be putting the map and his report on the Open Space website. Ms. Cordner asked what the student's goal with the project is. Ms. Masino shared that she thinks his goal is just to improve a place he loves in the community.

3. Discussion of Management/Restoration of Barndoor Triangle

Ms. Winters asked how frequent the Town is going to be mowing this area. Mr. Tyburski shared that he leaves it the Committee as to what they want to request. He shared that last year he believes they mowed in August and questioned if they wanted a spring mowing as well. As far as trying to chemically eradicate the invasives that are in there, if the Open Space Committee desires to go that route they have to seek permission from the Board of Selectmen. He shared that if the budget should pass there is \$25k allotted for strategic planning, education, and staff training on invasives. Ms. Winters shared she would like to focus on two specific sites where invasives are extremely visible: Simsbury Farms and Onion Mountain Park. The Committee looked at the estimated expenditures related to the Invasive and Ecological Evaluation Service Improvement Request: \$10k for overall strategic plan, \$10k for treatment of pilot/showcase properties, \$5k workshops and training and \$500 for miscellaneous education signage and materials. The Board of Selectmen and Conservation Commission would both need to sign off on the items.

Ms. Masino shared that there is a patch of invasives at Town Forest Pond that could just be dug up and asked what the time frame is for dredging Town Forest Pond. Mr. Tyburski shared that they are going to do it in-house and he will follow-up with her on that.

4. Discussion of Town Communication Venues

Ms. Winters asked if there was anything in the budget with regards to the website. Mr. Tyburski shared that they have permission to do a Facebook page and the website is just a matter of meeting to figure out how they want items to flow.

5. Discussion of Open Space Committee Process on Identifying Potential Parcels for Acquisition

Mr. Tyburski shared that in his experience, land owners who are interested in selling have reached out to the Town. The Board of Selectmen would then speak about it in Executive Session, if there was interest, they would refer it out to the Open Space Committee and other land use boards for further evaluation and discussion.

6. Discussion on Open Space Committee and POCD Tasks

Ms. Winters shared that Mr. McGregor has reached out stating that each group identified in the POCD has tasks and there is going to be a new subcommittee that will be reporting quarterly to the Planning Commission on the status of their assigned tasks.

Mr. Tyburski asked if they could add an additional item to discuss, Aquarion waterlines. He shared that Aquarion has been updating the water line service at Hoskins/Firetown Road. They are hoping to do a new water main that connects Catherine Drive to Windham Drive. There is already a sewer easement that goes through there, they are looking to put a waterline along the same tract. There would be some clearing that has to be done as part of the proposed project. The Town's Engineering Dept. Staff wanted to know if Open Space had any questions or concerns with this. Work is expected to take about five weeks. Ms. Winters suggested they wait until construction season and re-seed with a conservation mix. Ms. Masino asked 1) are they planning on leaving it a cleared habitat, 2) is there going to be any post-clearing monitoring and treatment of invasives, 3) she is worried this is going to be a larger project than stated (especially with tree clearing). Mr. Tyburski will bring these questions back to the Town's Engineering Staff.

7. Eagle Scout Projects on Preserved Public Land Guidelines

Ms. Masino shared she wanted to establish a policy wherein any Eagle Scout type service projects on Open Space would come to their Committee to make sure everyone is comfortable with it.

8. Other Business

Ms. Winters shared that there will be a Dark Sky presentation on April 9th at the First Church. June 8th Land Trust is holding an invasive program at the Apple Barn. May 4th is the Sustainability Fair at the Library.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Taylor
Committee Clerk