

From: Susan Mazurski May 14, 2009 12:52:05 PM
Subject: Open Space Committee Minutes 02/25/2009 SPECIAL APPROVED
To: SimsburyCT_OpenMin
Cc:

MINUTES

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Special Meeting – February 25, 2009

1. Call to Order

Mary Glassman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Simsbury Town Hall. Committee members present were John Loomis, Margery Winters, Dunny Barney and Helen Petersen.

2. Public Audience

Amy Zeiner stated that she is interested in putting together a Farm Day in Simsbury. Last year, they had the “Tour de Farms”, which was a bike ride from farm to farm. Approximately 120 people attended this event; it was very successful. The farmers sold a great deal of their products.

This year, Ms. Zeiner would like to have an educational Farm Day. People could drive from farm to farm; hikes at certain areas may be offered. She stated that they could have a map of all of the farms that would be participating. This is a great opportunity for people to go to all or any of the farms, even up into the Granby area.

Ms. Zeiner stated that this event could be held on the first Saturday in June, which is National Trails Day. Having the event on this day may bring in more people. She stated that the event could be held from 8am – 12pm or 10am – 2pm, whatever was best for the farmers.

Mary Glassman stated that the Town has put an application in for a grant for the Farm Liability Grants. She stated that the Town asked if the Farmers Market at Simsmore Square would co-sponsor a Farm Day; they agreed. Ms. Glassman stated that the grant they put in for was for \$5,000. She stated that the farmers market and Tourism Committee have expressed interest in helping promote Farm Day.

Ms. Zeiner stated that they could advertise in the newsletter and on their website for this event. They could also put something in the local papers. Ms. Zeiner stated that Sunday, the day after, could be their rain date, although it may not matter if there is bad weather because people will be

driving.

Ms. Glassman stated that the next step would be to set up a meeting with the Tourism Committee and Sherry from Awakenings. Ms. Zeiner stated that a lot of the work has already been done; the driving route from farm to farm has already been planned out. She stated that the farmers still need to be contacted and they also will need to advertise the event. Ms. Glassman stated that she will send out a memo to try and set a date to meet with all of the people and volunteers who would be willing to help. Ms. Speers, from Ethel Walker School, stated that school is still in session; the high school kids may want to help also. Ms. Zeiner stated that she will contact the farmers and bring a list of those farmers who would like to participate to the meeting for discussion.

Andrew Van Winkle stated his concerns regarding the Town Farm Dairy and the timing of the RFP process.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town Farm Dairy was notified that Mr. Van Winkle would need to be out by March 31st. She stated that, currently, there is no lease. No decisions have been made as of yet regarding the RFP.

Mr. Walsh stated that he was under the impression that there was an agreement between him and the Town of Simsbury. Mr. Dryden stated that until the RFP process was completed, it would be helpful for Mr. Walsh and the Friends of Town Farm Dairy to know what will happen to the farm because they have equipment at the farm. They will need time to figure out what to do with this equipment.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town feels strongly that the property needs to be cleaned out prior to the new tenant moving in, regardless of who that new tenant may be. She stated that Mr. Van Winkle moved in last December, knowing that the Town was going through the RFP process.

Mr. Barney questioned if there was equipment currently on the farm. Mr. Van Winkle stated that he currently has equipment and animals on the farm. Mr. Barney questioned if Mr. Van Winkle had a place to move the animals. He stated that he believes he does. Mr. Barney stated that one month should be sufficient time to move his personal things out, as well as his equipment.

In response to a question from Mr. Barney regarding the financial obligations of Friends of Town Farm Dairy, Mr. Dryden stated that they are currently liquidating their operating assets; they are close to the end of this process. He stated that the organization still exists; this does not influence what Friends of Town Farm Dairy does going forward.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town has been very accommodating to Friends of Town Farm Dairy. They have not collected rent; the Town still owns the property. She stated that whatever decision is made by the Town, they still need to get onto the property to clean it up.

Diane Nash stated that Friends of Town Farm Dairy are looking to this property for something very special for Simsbury. She feels that it will help to have a new beginning.

Bessie Speers from Ethel Walker School, stated that she moved to Simsbury approximately 1 ½ years ago. She is proud to live in a Town that cares about the land and education. She stated that she is please that there is student interest in environmental stewardship and environmental education. She feels that there are many possibilities regarding a Town/farm collaboration that may involve an education aspect.

Ms. Speers stated that she has been in contact with the Director of a foundation in Hartford that is funded by the Melville Cares About Homelessness. This foundation is in charge of an operation that has a farmers market, a farm to table restaurant, and an after school program, which many of the Ethel Walker students will be involved in. In conversations with this Director, Ms. Speers stated that there is an interest within the foundation for land to grow food for their farm to table restaurant. Ms. Speers stated that she sees great merit in a model of collaboration between the Towns, Cities and the educational institutions. This is a model that Simsbury could be known for across the country. She feels that this is the way of the future in terms of educating children.

Ms. Speers stated that if Ethel Walker gets the honor of participating in this program, she assured the Town that their ability to engage children, faculty and trustees behind this kind of program is huge. She stated that this is not something that she will enter into lightly.

Ms. Peterson questioned what the length of the sponsorship from the Melville Foundation would be regarding backing this project. Ms. Speers stated that they fund work not for a certain period of time, but forever.

Mr. Barney stated that with every farm this Committee has recently visited, they have all said that the hardest thing will be is to get started and to build collaboration. He stated that to have the willingness and faith that Ms. Speers represents and her partner, Karrie Wheaton, is a huge leap forward for the Town.

Ms. Peterson made a motion to go into Executive Session at 4:55 p.m. Ms.

Winters seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Ms. Peterson made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 5:45 p.m.

Ms. Winters seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

3. Adjourn

Ms. Peterson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:45 p.m. Ms. Winters seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.