

From: Susan Mazurski September 7, 2010 11:01:11 AM
Subject: Open Space Committee Minutes 05/05/2010 APPROVED
To: SimsburyCT_OpenMin
Cc:

MINUTES
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
Special Meeting – May 5, 2010

1. Call to Order

Mary Glassman called the Special meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Simsbury Town Hall. Committee members present were John Loomis, Helen Peterson and Jim Gallagher.

2. Public Audience

Ms. Nash stated that the Tree Conservancy has gotten several new members. She stated that Mr. Roy celebrated Arbor Day through the use of a memorial tree that was donated. She stated that the Tree Conservancy's long term goals include: educating the public; helping with the maintenance of the trees; and being responsible for helping people decide on correct memorial trees.

Ms. Nash stated that the Tree Conservancy would like to report to the Open Space Committee from now on. Ms. Glassman stated that the Open Space Committee will work with the Conservancy and she will add them to the agenda each month.

Ms. Nash stated that the trees along Hopmeadow Street in the Town Center have been identified and numbered. She is hopeful that the mapping will soon be completed. In the future, people will also have the ability to dial up on a cell phone to hear automated information regarding the trees along this stretch of Hopmeadow Street. Mr. Sawitzke stated that Town staff is currently working on the mapping and a maintenance program for the trees.

Ms. Glassman stated that she will put the Tree Conservancy on the June 2nd agenda and asked that they come to that meeting to give an update. She stated that, by then, the Town will be closing its fiscal year, so if there are funds that can identified, in the short term, that need to be addressed, funds may be available, which have not been expended.

3. Review/Adopt minutes of Special Meeting February 9, 2010

Several edits were made to the minutes.

Mr. Loomis made a motion to approve the February 9, 2010 minutes as amended. Ms. Peterson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

4. DEP Grant Application for Ethel Walker Open Space Parcel B

Ms. Glassman stated that the Board of Selectmen has approved a grant application for Ethel Walker Open Space Parcel B.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that that the Town has an option to purchase approximately 90 acres at Ethel Walker. They have applied for this grant through the State. The purchase price for this property is \$2 million; the grant is between 30-60% of that purchase price. Mr. Sawitzke stated that this property would be an asset to the Town because it is a nice mix of fields, wetlands and forests and also because this would help link other parcels of open space.

Mr. Loomis questioned when the Town was notified of this grant. Mr. Sawitzke stated that the State gives the Town approximately one month to submit the application. During this time the Town needed to get two appraisals and also the Board of Selectmen approval.

Mr. Loomis questioned how the appraisals reconcile with the original purchase price. Mr. Sawitzke stated that the market has decreased since early 2008; these original options were exercised in 2006. The current valuation of this property is \$2.4 million.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Ethel Walker parcel was discussed during the budget talks this year; it has been a part of the six-year long-term capital plan. She stated that questions were raised as to whether the land is worth the same amount as it was when it was appraised. The Board of Selectmen felt that it was still a little premature to have this conversation because it does not come up until next year's budget. They will be discussing this issue in the fall.

5. Grant Receipt for Gersten/Laurel Hill Open Space

Mr. Sawitzke stated that this is approximately 65 acres; it is all highland area. He stated that this was one of the Plan of Conservation and

Development's key recommendations for acquisition.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that this was a 50% grant. He stated that the community support was excellent for this property. This parcel may make sense to do an exchange with the State, although what the Town could swap it for would have to be an important discussion. The Town owns several pieces of property on the ridge; for continuity, this would make sense.

Ms Glassman suggested that there be a ribbon cutting ceremony for this property; Mr. Sawitzke agreed.

6. Farmer lease proposals for Barndoor Hill (east side)
agriculture property and possible action

Ms. Glassman stated that the Board of Selectmen approved, with five conditions, three lease proposals for Barndoor Hill (east side) agriculture property.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that Mr. Lane has been very helpful in gathering information regarding organic practices in farming. The Open Space Committee supported agricultural use of the Town's farmland properties.

Mr. Loomis stated that organic practices are a matter of trust; there is no formal certifying organization. Ms. Glassman stated that the Board of Selectmen felt that the land should be tested, pre and post, to make sure everything that was agreed upon is done.

Mr. Lane stated that certain U.S. Laws need to be followed in order to declare that organic practices have been followed. He stated that organic farming is low impact; it has low nitrogen, which will not contaminate wells. Pesticides are not used; biocides, a bacteria based soil, are used. He stated that although it is a matter of trust, when farmers are renting from the Town, they are renting from the people. He stated that this is just an honest effort in order to get more land to rotate some of their crops.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that the standard agreement that the Town has with the farmers has three basic provisions, including: a cancelation clause for non-compliance; insurance requirements; and bonding requirements. The Board of Selectmen has recommended that the farmers start with a one year lease.

Mr. Loomis questioned what the allocation between the three farmers would be. Mr. Sawitzke stated that he believes one farmer will be getting between 2-3 acres; another farmer between 7-10 acres; and another farmer between 10-12 acres. The total usage is between 16-22 acres.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town has received the Bike Friendly Award; Simsbury is the first Town in Connecticut to receive this award.

Ms. Peterson stated that Mr. Peck has asked the Open Space Committee to discuss the Town owned land on the other side of Iron Horse Boulevard; there is no policy that has been established as to its use for the future. Ms. Glassman stated that she would put this item on the next agenda.

7. Adjourn

Mr. Loomis made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 p.m. Ms. Peterson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.