

From: Susan Mazurski November 8, 2010 9:32:39 AM
Subject: Open Space Committee Minutes 09/01/2010 APPROVED
To: SimsburyCT_OpenMin
Cc:

MINUTES
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
September 1, 2010

1. Call to Order

Mary Glassman called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Simsbury Town Hall. Committee members present were Margery Winters, John Loomis, Helen Peterson and Jim Gallagher.

2. Public Audience

There was none.

3. Review/Adopt minutes of Special Meeting May 5, 2010

Several edits were made to the minutes.

Mr. Loomis made a motion to approve the Special Meeting of May 5, 2010 as amended. Ms. Peterson seconded the motion, which was approved. Commissioner Winters abstained.

The Committee discussed the Town owned land on the other side of Iron Horse Boulevard and its future use. Mr. Toner stated that there was some interest in these fields for lacrosse, although there was no formal action.

4. Discuss completion of the Town's inventory and classification of open space – Gerry Toner/Tom Roy

Ms. Glassman stated that it is the intent of the Open Space Committee to get a sense of how much open space the Town is currently managing. Mr. Toner and Mr. Roy were tasked with looking at this issue to see where the Town's resources are going and where staff hours are being used. Ms. Peterson stated that this has been an ongoing issue regarding acquiring open space and not providing a maintenance fund. Mr. Loomis stated that this Committee needs to consider if the Town should acquire additional open space and whether there is a better use for this land.

Mr. Roy showed the Committee members a map of Simsbury's Town owned open space and stated that the primary areas of open space are currently being mowed by the Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Toner named the larger parcels that the Town is actively maintaining including Curtis Park and the surrounding areas and Laurel Lane and Great Pond Road. He stated that the Greenway is also mowed, although there are also several costs relating to the supplies and reconstruction of sections of the pavement.

Regarding a maintenance fund, Ms. Peterson stated that the Town needs to consider how this fund would be applied and if it would be applied to the departments that provide the service or if it would apply to open space only.

Ms. Glassman stated that this mapping is a good snapshot of how the Town is currently maintaining their open space. The Committee now needs to discuss what the Town is doing to see if any adjustments are necessary.

Mr. Toner stated that the open space that is acquired from subdivisions is not always beneficial to the Town. He stated that as the years pass, the mature trees and vegetation grow, requiring more maintenance. Ms. Glassman stated that when the Town makes policy decisions regarding what to require, they need to look at the impact of what they are asking.

There was a small discussion regarding surrounding Towns having a policy in place regarding fees in lieu of open space. Mr. Loomis stated that the Planning Commission has done some research and they are discussing this issue.

In response to a question by Ms. Peterson, Mr. Roy stated that they use approximately 550 to 900 man hours per year to maintain Town owned open space. He stated that they try to mow the open space twice a year, although there are some parcels that require more frequent mowing.

In response to a question by Ms. Glassman, Mr. Roy stated that the cul-de-sacs are the hardest to maintain. This is because many times these are small parcels that are many miles off route; distance and travel time becomes an issue. Residents are also looking for the Town to mow these cul-de-sacs more than just a few times per year.

Ms. Glassman stated that the maintenance of open space hinges on the budget. If the Town continues to maintain the same amount of open space, they will have to hire more people. She stated that they need to prioritize and to look at how the Town is using its resources and make any changes where necessary. A conversation will need to be had with the Simsbury Land Trust regarding this issue as well.

Ms. Peterson questioned what the possibility was for the Town to outsource some of the maintenance to residents. Ms. Glassman stated that Mr. Toner and Mr. Roy could put together a list of sites that they would like to dispose of. The Committee could then do some research on how to proceed. She stated that Ms. Peterson's idea is one way, although she would like the Town to take care of the problem. The Town needs to prioritize what they take care of; they cannot afford to maintain everything. There was a short discussion regarding looking into residents purchasing conservation easements and maintain them, although they would be prohibited to build on them. Ms. Peterson questioned if there were any homeowners in Town currently doing this that they could use as a model. Mr. Roy stated that he believes several residents already do this informally.

5. Outstanding Issues

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town recently collected \$35,000 for the Flamig Farm development rights going back to 1998; \$350,000 for the Gersten property land purchase; \$185,000 for the Hall Farm development right purchase; and \$195,000 for the Ethel Walker land purchase.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Open Space Committee needs to discuss the following at their next meeting: the highland fund status; Tree Committee update; Simsbury Meadows plan; farming leases at Meadwood Triangle; review of the organic farming policy; and consider establishing a policy for a maintenance fund. Ms. Glassman stated that the Town is no longer pursuing Lake Basile.

6. Adjourn

Ms. Peterson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:25 p.m. Mr. Gallagher seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.