

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

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