

Open Space Committee
Wednesday, February 3, 2021
4:30PM- Via Zoom Video Conference
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - ADOPTED

PRESENT: Eric Wellman, Margery Winters, Susan Masino, David Bush, Tim Walczak, Helen Peterson and Bill Rice

ALSO PRESENT: Maria Capriola, Town Manager, Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation, Tom Fitzgerald, Management Specialist, Tom Hazel, Zoning Compliance Officer, were also in attendance.

Call to Order

Mr. Wellman called the meeting to order at 4:37 PM

1.) Approval of Minutes

Mr. Bush made a motion to accept the minutes of the December 2, 2020 meeting as presented. Ms. Winters seconded the motion. The Committee members voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2020 meeting.

2.) PA 490 Referral to Open Space Work Group

Mr. Wellman stated that at the last Board of Selectmen meeting there was a discussion about putting more guidelines and structure around PA-490 as it relates to what qualifies as open space. PA-490 allows property owners who have either forest, open space or farmland to have a very different tax rate. Mr. Wellman stated that the Board of Selectmen is asking the Open Space workgroup to develop a policy and guidelines around what qualifies as open space should someone want the PA-490 designation. Ms. Capriola shared that the Town has a relatively new assessor who was looking for the guidelines or criteria for properties that should qualify under PA-490 (it is currently around a dozen properties) and the assessor had a really difficult time finding any criteria for this. Ms. Capriola stated that she thought the workgroup could be really helpful in developing a draft set of criteria for properties that could qualify under PA 490.

3.) Policies Work Group Update

• Model Agricultural Lease and RFP

Ms. Winters stated that the workgroup has been working on the RFP and they did submit it to Town staff wherein it was refined. Ms. Winters stated that the workgroup was happy with the draft and thinks it's ready to go. Ms. Winters asked if there were currently any farmers interested in filling out the RFP. Mr. Hazel stated he has had one inquiry. Ms. Capriola stated that they haven't issued it formally on the Town's website, however, she does feel that they are really close to having a final document ready. Ms. Appleby is currently reviewing some of the insurance requirements with their insurance carrier. Mr. Hazel stated he will be working with Mr. Glidden on naming the parcels in the field for identification so if a farmer wants to look at a property before leasing they will know exactly what the property and boundaries are. Mr. Walczyk will reach out to a few farmers for input on the RFP.

- **Draft Acquisition Criteria Policy**

Ms. Peterson stated that bullet number nine under Roman numeral four says “provide sites for active recreation”. She believes that the word “active” doesn’t belong, coordinate or fit and she questions why it’s in there as she feels that it is misleading. Ms. Winters stated that that was a good point as there is no definition as to what “active” and “passive” recreation is in the document. Mr. Tyburski stated that he thinks this language came from the POCD. Mr. Rice said that when they were developing the POCD they didn’t want to preclude active activities on open space. Mr. Rice asked Ms. Peterson why she felt that the word “active” didn’t fit. Ms. Peterson stated that she never considered walking or hiking an active activity, it is a passive activity. Ms. Peterson stated that in the opening paragraph to the criteria it states, “land which is protected from development and preserved in its current state.” Ms. Winters stated that it does call out in the first paragraph “passive recreation” and then specified it and there isn’t a definition of active. Mr. Hazel suggested reviewing the POCD to see what the open space goal is. Ms. Capriola stated that in the opening paragraph of the draft it says open space would essentially be left in its current state, she said they may want to give some thought to that wording, for example, what if they wanted to put in a walking trail. Mr. Bush shared his thoughts that the word active should stay in and perhaps be defined better. Ms. Peterson suggested a qualifier be put in. Mr. Wellman asked if they could clarify what they mean in the policy by “active recreation” as it seemed that there was a consensus to qualify it appropriately. Mr. Hazel stated that he could review that in his department and review the POCD and try to get some better clarification. Mr. Tyburski stated that they don’t know what active recreation will look like in 40 years so he doesn’t think it should be narrowed down too much. Mr. Hazel stated that that is a reason to maybe rely on something that can be put in the POCD so it gets reviewed every 10 years.

Ms. Peterson stated that the fifteen bullets under Roman numeral four might be perceived as giving a preference of value, in order to make each bullet be value equally perhaps a qualifier should be put before the colon of the sentence before the bullets. Mr. Wellman agreed.

- **Other**

Mr. Bush asked if there was an update regarding the Antonio property negotiations. Ms. Capriola stated that the Board of Selectmen did authorize a purchase and sale agreement for the disposition of approximately just under an acre of land on Holcomb Street and then acquiring an easement for the bike path. The purchase and sale agreement was just executed about a week ago and the Town’s attorney is in the process of working through the closing checklist and the closing is likely to happen in March. Mr. Rice inquired about the finance of the sale. Ms. Capriola stated that the disposition sale price was about six thousand dollars, the acquisition of the easement was around 52K (plus or minus).

ADJOURN

Mr. Bush made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Winters. All voted in favor. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 5:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Taylor
Committee Clerk