

Open Space Committee
Wednesday, July 1, 2020
4:30PM- Via Zoom Video Conference
REGUALR MEETING MINUTES - ADOPTED

PRESENT: Eric Wellman, First Selectman, Margery Winters, Susan Masino, Timothy Walczak, Helen Peterson, Bill Rice, David Bush

ALSO PRESENT: Maria Capriola, Town Manager, Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation, Mike Glidden, Planning Director, Tom Fitzgerald, Management Specialist

Absent: Anne Erickson

Call to Order

Mr. Wellman called the meeting to order at 4:44PM; due to technical difficulties, the meeting start time was slightly delayed.

1.) Public Audience

Mr. Wellman read public comments that were submitted in advance of the meeting.

Diane Nash commented to the disposition of Holcomb Street disposition stating that the land is public land that benefits all and the sale would make it private land to the benefit of one. She also stated that the unintended consequences of the sale, the precedent it sets, is what unites the opposition. Without full disclosure, this single transaction will undermine policies and procedures for the disposition of open space and undermine our trust in the operation of our government. With full disclosure of price, timing, and impact, confidence would be restored in our policies and procedures as well as trust that rules are applied, to all citizens, without favoritism.

Ms. Nash urged the Committee to let their voice be heard to the BOS in defense of preservation and protection of public land and rules governing its stewardship and disposition.

2.) Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wellman made a motion to approve the March 4, 2020 minutes. The minutes passed as presented unanimously.

Mr. Wellman made a motion to approve the June 2, 2020 minutes. The minutes passed as presented unanimously.

Updates

Parks and Open Space Master Plan – Mr. Tyburski reported that an updated draft of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan was received and it will be shared with the Committee as well as C.P.R. There will be a joint meeting of the Open Space Committee and C.P.R. on Friday, July 17th. Mr. Tyburski requested that the document not be shared yet as it is still in draft form. Mr. Wellman questioned when

the document would be public. Mr. Tyburksi reported that it would be included in the packet for the joint July 17th meeting.

Status of Meadowood Referral– Mr. Glidden reported that the Meadowood Referral has made its way through all the land use commissions, all of which gave a positive referral. The Zoning Commission had a split vote and was unable to grant a positive referral. It is on the agenda for tomorrow’s Culture, Parks and Recreation meeting.

Mr. Bush questioned the reasoning as to why zoning was a split vote. Mr. Glidden stated that three of the members felt there was a need for more affordable housing in the town, the other three members saw the value of the preservation in the value of the land.

Ms. Masino stated that it is her understanding that the town owns 24 acres outright (currently slated as athletic fields) as part of Meadowood, that’s a reserved piece of the property so if we had a different vision for that, such as affordable housing, there is nothing precluding still having that goal for the property and there may be other affordable housing options that come up in between. She also stated that affordable housing makes the most sense when it is near transportation, services and jobs.

Status of Potential Disposition of Holcomb Street Parcel– Mr. Glidden reported that the Board of Selectmen opened the public hearing on this matter and due to the high number of public comments received they decided to keep the public hearing open until their next meeting August 10, 2020.

Mr. Bush questioned if there was a general theme to the feedback received. Mr. Wellman stated there was feedback as far as process and making sure they are being as transparent as possible. Around two dozen letters were received that were against the disposition.

Pollinator Pathway Program Possible Grants– Ms. Masino reported that one of the promising options is a matching grant through sustainable CT. Although they originally ran out of money, they are going to be re-launching the program. The grants are up to 30K each and it is an easy application, we would also get points on our sustainable CT program. The grants are flexible, could be for public education, planting the pollinator garden, paying experts for advice, renting items, etc.

3.) Policies/Policies Work Group

- a. **Natural Stewardship Policy**
- b. **Disposition of Open Space Policy**
- c. **Other**

Ms. Masino provided the Committee with a draft version of “A Natural Forest Ecosystem: Best Practice for Natural Stewardship”. She shared that she has been trying to pull together resources for how we should take care of a natural area, when intervention is necessary and how those decisions should be made.

89 Ms. Masino spoke to the work on West Mt. Road related to Masaco State Forest, it's the major east-
90 west wildlife corridor that was recognized when Ethel Walker Woods was preserved. It's been identified
91 as the eastern wild way, a major corridor which goes up the east coast which is important to protect for
92 bio-diversity and wildlife. There is a severe project going on that people were upset about, DEEP came
93 out and there is a forum this evening. Ms. Masino stated there has been a shifting reason for their
94 project and if people want more information, she would recommend people go to the website to check
95 it out. Mr. Bush questioned if it is a local or state project. Ms. Masino said it is a state project.

96
97 Mr. Wellman spoke to DEEP last week and they said they would put a temporary pause on the work
98 based on all the comments and feedback received.

99
100 **ADJOURN**

101 Mr. Bush made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Winters. All voted in favor. Motion
102 passed. Meeting adjourned at 5:23pm.

103
104 Respectfully submitted,
105 Heather Taylor
106 Committee Clerk