

From: Susan Mazurski May 14, 2009 12:53:50 PM
Subject: Open Space Committee Minutes 04/01/2009 Approved
To: SimsburyCT_OpenMin
Cc:

MINUTES
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – April 1, 2009

1. Call to Order

Mary Glassman called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Simsbury Town Hall. Committee members present were John Loomis, Margery Winters, Dunny Barney and Helen Peterson.

2. Public Audience

Diane Nash, Chairman of the Tree Committee, stated that Main Street Partnership will be introducing the members of the Tree Committee at an upcoming Board of Selectmen meeting.

Ms. Nash stated that the Tree Committee will be identifying trees on the 1.1 mile corridor on Hop Meadow Street. This is the same stretch that CL&P is looking at increasing their power lines. She stated that Mr. Roy and Mr. Sawitzke have been to several meetings with CL&P. They are discussing a good resolution for what needs to be done and they are also looking at costs for bringing underground power down Iron Horse Boulevard. Ms. Nash stated that CL&P will also be bringing in photographs and trimming necessities for the lines on Hopmeadow Street. Ms. Nash stated that the Tree Committee is becoming important to the outcome of what CL&P is doing that otherwise could have been drastic.

Ms. Nash stated that they have 2 members that are involved in Save-A-Tree on their committee, who have been helping to map and identify the trees within the 1.1 mile corridor. Another member is taking pictures of the trees. The Tree Committee is also measuring the trees and rating their condition.

Ms. Nash stated that they will be celebrating Arbor Day on April 24th. Ms. Glassman questioned if they would be planting a tree for Arbor Day. Ms. Nash stated that they thought they had a commitment from the Library, although they are not sure that the Library will be able to fund the tree. Ms. Glassman stated that the Town would like to fund the purchase of a tree.

Ms. Winters made a motion that the Town purchase a tree for the Tree Committee to plant on Arbor Day. Mr. Barney seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Ms. Glassman introduced Grace Epstein, from Ethel Walker School and Diana Moody. She stated that Grace will be planting a garden in front of the Town Hall to highlight the importance of community farming. Grace Epstein stated that she will be putting together a proposal, although she is still looking for a good location for the garden. The major concern with the location is the lighting and whether the bed will be raised. She is working through Gerry Toner and the Culture, Parks and Recreation Department regarding the education aspect of this.

3. Review/Adopt minutes of March 4, 2009 Regular Meeting

Several edits were made to the minutes of March 4, 2009.

Mr. Loomis made a motion to approve the March 4, 2009 minutes as amended. Mr. Barney seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

4. Update of Town Farm RFP

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town is moving forward with conversations with Mr. Miller, although there is some confusion regarding who owns some of the equipment on the farm. She stated that Mr. Barney has volunteered to work with Town staff to host a meeting to move along a resolution regarding the equipment. She stated that Mr. Van Winkle has indicated that he has moved to another location and is working on getting his equipment and animals removed from the property.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town is doing a credit check on Mr. Miller and trying to figure out how much land he needs and where it will be located. The Town will hopefully have a resolution by the end of the week.

Ms. Glassman stated that the community farming concept is moving forward. Although there is not an entity yet that exists, it is close to being formed.

Ms. Nash stated that the community farming group is ready to sign a lease with the farmer that they will be using. She stated that Mr. Walsh will be cleaning up and tilling the fields on the southeast side of the property at no expense.

Ms. Nash stated that the Town Farm's organic certification will run out on May 1, 2009. She stated that if they let it run out, it will take 5 years

to renew it. She stated that Mr. Walsh has offered to do the necessary paperwork to renew this certification.

Ms. Nash stated that there is a great deal of support in Town for community farming and they are ready to start. She suggested having the Town Attorney look into if the Town Farm Dairy's books are clean so they could assume their 501C; they cannot do this until there is confirmation. She stated that they are hoping to use their website; they have listed those things that have no monetary value. She stated that these things will all be a help to get the community farm up and running. Ms. Nash stated that people want to help but there are still many questions that need to be answered.

5. Update of Barndoor Triangle RFP

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town got seven RFP responses back for the Triangle, although they have not had a chance to evaluate the proposals yet. Many of the responses have been from local farmers. She distributed a list of the proposals to the Committee members for their review and feedback.

Mr. Barney questioned if the farmers that would be growing vegetables would be setting up a sales operation off the field so the vegetables could be used by Simsbury residents. Ms. Glassman stated that she was unsure if the lease would allow that.

The Committee members discussed the pros and cons of leasing. Ms. Peterson suggested not entering into a long-term lease for the first year. Ms. Glassman stated that most farmers are looking for a long-term lease. She stated that they need to find a balance regarding comfort for the Town and what the farmer wants.

Ms. Peterson stated that rye and hay are more aesthetically please than other crops. The farmers that are looking to have a food crop may have crates and boxes along the fields because there are no structures on the property to store the produce in.

Mr. Barney stated that they should also be specific how the land will be used regarding pesticides and herbicides with moving towards getting organically certified in the future. He also feels that they should think about encouraging consumptive crops rather than hay and rye. He would like to have as much food production, with the highest quality possible, for the local stores and residents.

Regarding the list of proposals that was distributed, Ms. Peterson asked

why there was such a range of prices. Ms. Glassman stated that this was left up to the farmer regarding what they were willing to spend. Mr. Barney stated that the price is based on what the farmer would be growing. He stated that his preference would be for this land to be used by Simsbury farmers; these are Simsbury business people. He stated that the health of their farms is enhanced by the availability of this land.

Ms. Glassman stated that this list of proposals will be revised in order to evaluate it. If there are farmers that the Town cannot accommodate on the Triangle, she stated that they could look at other places in Town that there might be available agriculture land. Ms. Peterson asked that this be articulated to the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Glassman stated that things need to move quickly so the farmers can start planting their crops this spring. There will be a Board of Selectmen meeting on April 13th; she is hoping to have a recommendation to them by that meeting.

Ms. Winters stated that if any of the farmers will just be growing corn that is very hard on the soil year after year. She would be interested to know what sort of crop rotation they are planning.

6. Discussion of Regional Agriculture Commission

Ms. Glassman stated that at the last Farmington Valley collaborative, there was an offer from Granby to create a regional agricultural commission; they have an agricultural commission in their Town. They are interested in making it regional because they do not have enough farmers to draw from. She stated that many of the Towns have already expressed interest in this. She questioned if the Open Space Committee would like to host a meeting of the Towns to discuss this concept. Ms. Glassman stated that this Commission is a group of volunteers with farming experience to discuss and work on issues.

7. Adjourn

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary A. Glassman
First Selectman

