

From: Susan Mazurski March 3, 2010 11:35:58 AM  
Subject: Open Space Committee Minutes 10/07/2009 APPROVED  
To: SimsburyCT\_OpenMin  
Cc:

MINUTES  
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE  
Regular Meeting – October 7, 2009

1. Call to Order

Mary Glassman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Simsbury Town Hall. Committee members present were Margery Winters, Helen Peterson and Dunny Barney. Mr. Loomis arrived at 4:45 p.m.

2. Public Audience

Diane Nash stated that she is asking for an opportunity for the Tree Committee to make a presentation at the next Open Space Committee in order to request that the Tree Committee come under the jurisdiction of the Open Space Committee. She stated that although there are advantages to being under Main Street Partnership, a way to attract more members is for the Tree Committee to be broader in scope.

Ms. Nash stated that the Tree Committee did have their first Arbor Day celebration. She stated that they have also identified the trees along Hopmeadow Street. They have taken pictures and the condition of the trees will be added. She stated that this information was done in time for the Charrette and was part of the treescape. She stated that now money is needed to print this tree-walk book. Ms. Nash stated that Mr. Sawitzke and Mr. Roy are continuing to work on this book regarding how big it should be and putting in the additional pages with pictures. The Tree Committee wants this book to be usable and helpful. She stated that this will be historical as well as an identification of these trees. They have not yet gotten prices to complete this project.

Ms. Nash stated that if the Tree Committee becomes part of the Open Space Committee, which is where it originated, they can attract more people and have a broader scope. She stated that they have already planted two trees that were dedicated from Simsbury residents. The Tree Committee would like to get plaque identifications for these trees.

Ms. Nash stated that Margery Winters and others will be putting together a plan for the Tree Committee regarding their long and short term goals. She stated that this will be submitted at the November meeting.

Mr. Barney suggested that Ms. Nash look into the Nature Conservancy in Middletown when researching prices to print the tree-walk book.

Ms. Ryerson, Holcomb Road, stated that she would like to encourage the Open

Space Committee members to recommend farming without the use of pesticides on the Triangle. She suggested farming hay. She also asked the Committee members to consider the land for walking and biking trails. She stated her concerns regarding fencing installed on the land.

Mr. Barney stated that growing hay does not mean that no pesticides will be used.

### 3. Review/Adopt minutes of July 29, 2009

Several edits were made to the July minutes.

Mr. Barney made a motion to approve the July 29, 2009 minutes as amended.

Mr. Loomis seconded the motion, which was approved. Ms. Peterson and Winters abstained.

### 4. Town Triangle Update

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town's first priority was to remove the house. She stated that the Town did receive a donation of \$10,000 from Griffin Land that can be used for the structures on the property. She stated that the Fire Department used the house for an exercise; they burned down the house for free. She stated that the money is still in the bank and the house is safely gone, although \$2,000 of the money was used for the removal of asbestos prior to the burning of the house.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town needs to shore up the barn. She suggested putting some or all of the balance of this money into the barn in order to preserve it. The barn needs to be stabilized. The cables need to be replaced and some improvements to the roof and sides of the barn need to be done. She stated that she is not sure \$8,000 will be enough to cover all of these improvements.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town will need to go out to bid regarding the barn repairs. The Board of Selectmen will have to authorize the contract. Having an endorsement from the Open Space Committee would be appropriate.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Open Space Committee needs to discuss possibly using the Triangle for farming and having a policy in place prior to going out for an RFP.

Ms. Glassman stated that she has received two e-mails from residents concerning the Triangle. One e-mail states that they would like to preserve the Triangle as open space. The Committee also heard from someone in the public audience state that they would like minimal organic farming type of use for this land.

Mr. Barney made a motion to endorse the use of the balance of the funds

from Griffin Land for repairing the barn. Ms. Peterson seconded the motion.

Ms. Winters amended the motion to include a small portion of those funds to repair the site where the house was. Mr. Barney accepted this amendment. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Glassman stated that there are two issues: what to use the Triangle for; and a farm policy update. She questioned if the policy should be for certified organic or organic practices. Mr. Barney stated that the land is not certifiable as it stands. He stated that the issue is whether the Town will urge the practice of organic farming on Town land that is leased. He stated that there is no reason why a non-organic farmer cannot use organic practices. After doing that for three years, the land will be certifiable.

Ms. Peterson questioned if the Town has lost the opportunity to have this year be the first of those three years. Ms. Glassman stated that they went out to bid, although they did not enter into an agreement. They approached local farmers to cut hay down; Mr. Tuller has donated his time to cut the hay.

Ms. Winters stated that it is good to have a resting and building up of the soil. Mr. Barney suggested having the Town leaf pick-up be deposited on the land. Ms. Glassman stated that she would look into this suggestion.

Mr. Barney made a motion to have the Town draft an organic farm policy for Town land prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting. Ms. Peterson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Paul Nicholson, 11 Whitcomb, stated that there was a meeting at the Simsbury Public Library regarding the Triangle. He stated that 40 people spoke at this meeting. There were 28 residents in favor of this land being open space. He stated that he does not want this land to be used for farming or athletic fields, although he would not mind hay. He stated his concerns regarding pesticides for farming. He stated that he does not want the Open Space Committee to go with a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for organic farming. He stated that the Town residents voted for open space and that is what it should be.

Mr. Barney stated that it takes nitrogen to grow hay. Hay has almost as much inputs as any other crop. Hay left unattended with no fertilizers will be a mess. He stated that there are ways to find out what is being put in the ground. The soils need to pass tests to stay in business. He stated that there are definitive ways to find out what organic farmers put in the ground.

Ms. Glassman stated that the implication of doing nothing on this land will

be overgrown weeds. She stated that there are impacts to every decision, whether they want open vistas, natural land, etc.

Ms. Peterson stated that it costs a great deal of money to preserve a meadow. The Town has lost a number of meadows because they cannot maintain the open space they have. Historically, the Triangle has been in the Plan of Conservation and Development. She stated that the POCD does not state a use for the Triangle. Mr. Barney stated that the use for this land is to connect Great Pond to McLean, which is stated in the POCD.

Ms. Winters suggested investigating ways to improve the soil. She feels that it is too premature to discuss farming. She recommended grasses that would be mowed annually. She stated that they need to build up the soil. Mr. Barney stated that an organic farmer would be best to do this.

In summary, Ms. Glassman stated that a draft policy on organic farming will be written in time to review and discuss at the next meeting; nothing should be done to the Triangle that would affect the nearby area or the wildlife. She stated that, for the next meeting, they will need more information regarding how much it would cost to improve the soil and what crop would have the least impact. She stated that she would call the State Agriculture Commission to get their opinion. Mr. Barney stated that there are several different crops that can be planted, although it may take several years to improve the soil.

Ms. Winters stated that the Town should have a long-term strategy for the Triangle. Mr. Barney stated that he does not want to lose another growing season. Decisions need to be made. Ms. Glassman stated that they need to take their time and be prudent and to establish policies for the long term. She stated that taking the year off in order to let the soil rest is not a bad thing.

The Committee discussed the barns and preserving them. Ms. Glassman stated that she is unsure of what the barns may be used for in the future, although the Town should be good stewards with them. Jim Lagasse, Holcomb Street, questioned what was happening with the other barns. Ms. Glassman stated that Griffin Land owns several of the barns. She has contacted them regarding the need to maintain them. She stated that she will follow up with the Zoning Enforcement Officer regarding this issue.

## 5. Community Farm Update

Mr. Barney stated that the lease has been signed. The new name is Community Farm of Simsbury. He stated that a Board of 16 members has been established. Executive Director, Tim Goodwin, has also been hired. Mr. Barney stated that many things are happening around the farm, including

painting, mowing and seeding and getting gardens ready for the spring.

Mr. Goodwin stated that they have done a great deal of work on the grounds of the Community Farm of Simsbury. He stated that they will be having a fall event on November 1st. This will be their kick-off. This event will feature a farmer's market, art displays, demonstrations and activities for children. All of the activities at this event will be farm related.

Mr. Goodwin stated that Community Farm of Simsbury is working hard to have programs. They are currently working on curriculums for these programs. He is looking forward to the Community Farm of Simsbury coming alive this spring/summer.

Mr. Barney encouraged everyone to drive through the property to see all of the changes that have been made.

Mr. Goodwin stated that they are recruiting volunteers. On October 17th, they will be holding a Volunteer Work Day at Community Farm of Simsbury from 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. He stated that several schools in the area have already sent volunteers to help. There has been a lot of enthusiasm by the schools.

#### 7. Regional Agricultural Commission Update

Ms. Glassman stated that there is not a Regional Agricultural Commission in the State of Connecticut; they would like to start one. She stated that they would need to work on several policies, including a policy that would allow the Town to share information with other Towns. If this concept is supported, the next step would be to call a meeting with other Towns to talk about how to structure this Commission.

#### 8. Other Business

The Committee discussed the Open Space Fund. Ms. Glassman stated that this would need an endorsement from the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. Mr. Barney suggested that the Open Space Committee make a recommendation at their next meeting. This will be placed on the next agenda.

Mr. Loomis questioned that, once the Fund is established, who would be authorized to direct the money to fund this Fund. Ms. Glassman stated that it would be the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance.

Ms. Glassman stated that it is in the Town's best interest to have a fund in place to maintain open space. Mr. Barney suggested having Mr. Toner isolate in his budget, all of the land management expenses that the Town spends in maintaining open space. Ms. Glassman stated that Town staff is

meeting regularly to come up with a maintenance plan. They have just included a maintenance schedule for the roads in Town. They are trying to do this same thing for open space in Town.

Ms. Peterson stated that she feels many opportunities are being missed by people who would like to donate funds because the Town does not have an Open Space Fund. A fund needs to be in place.

9. Adjourn

Mr. Barney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:58 p.m. Ms. Peterson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.