

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Lisa Heavner called the regular meeting of the Open Space Committee to order at 4:30 PM on Wednesday, April 5, 2017. The meeting was held in the main meeting room of the Simsbury Town Offices located at 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT. In attendance were the following committee members: Helen Peterson, Donald Rieger, and David Ryan. Staff included Gerard Toner, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation, Jeff Shea, Town Engineer and Adam Kessler, Project Engineer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

No one spoke at public audience.

REVIEW/ADOPT MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 1, 2017

There were no changes to the minutes.

ETHEL WALKER WOODS UPDATE

Mr. Kessler described the improvements planned to the parking area and access to the trailhead. He said the plan had been approved by the Conservation Commission and would be presented to the Zoning Commission due to the flood plain regulations. At least part of the parking lot would be paved, with more possible if the competitive bidding yielded a low enough cost. The walkway would be paved and graded to be handicapped accessible. The bridge would be replaced, using the existing foundation, and the pavilion would be upgraded somewhat if the cost permitted. Two disused buildings would be removed. A new park sign would be installed at the entrance, and Milone and MacBroom, the consultant, would be asked for advice on a master plan for signage throughout the park. The work was described as the first phase of implementing the master plan for Ethel Walker Woods. In response to a question from Ms. Heavner, Mr. Kessler said that construction would require a few months. In response to a question from Ms. Peterson, he said that the parking lot would accommodate about thirty cars.

PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (POCD)

Mr. Ryan observed that a draft of the POCD had become available on the website.

SIGNAGE ALONG RIVER UPDATE

Mr. Toner said that the *carry in/carry out* signs would be installed in a matter of days. He said that the April meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission would consider uniform signage generally but that a final format had not yet been decided upon. At Ms. Heavner's suggestion, he said he would speak with Mr. Kessler about obtaining input from Milone and MacBroom.

REVIEW OF WATER SHORTAGE ORDINANCE

Ms. Heavner said that the proposed ordinance had been presented to the Board of Selectmen at a public hearing. The proposal having gleaned only three votes, it was referred to a subcommittee of Mr. Kelly and Mr. Paine to determine if language requiring that efforts at voluntary conservation be

45 exhausted prior to the imposition of restrictions could be agreed to and if it would be sufficient to
46 garner another vote. Ms. Peterson asked about the present status of the drought. Ms. Heavner
47 and Mr. Rieger both said that they did not have up-to-date information but that two weeks ago
48 most of the state was still classified as experiencing severe drought. Mr. Rieger observed that
49 replenishment of groundwater was a slow process, and that pumping of groundwater drew water
50 from wetlands and watercourses. He cited an article that said that damage the drought had
51 inflicted on rivers and streams and the organisms therein would take decades to mend.

OPEN SPACE & PARKS MASTER PLANS

53 Mr. Toner reported that the Board of Selectmen had approved the preparation of master plans for
54 parks and for open space. It had been some years since such plans had been done. He wondered if
55 committee members had a point of view as to whether the two plans should be combined into
56 one. Ms. Peterson said she thought that keeping them separate was essential so that continued
57 acquisition of open space could be possible and that open space fund monies could be applied to
58 maintenance. Mr. Ryan questioned whether any more open space was needed. Ms. Peterson said
59 that leading conservationists believed that one must always be open to more acquisition. Mr. Ryan
60 asked if the master plans would duplicate the POCD. Mr. Toner replied that they would harmonize
61 with it. Mr. Shea wondered if the Ethel Walker Woods master plan might serve to some extent as a
62 model for the open space master plan. Ms. Heavner thought it could and observed that the EWW
63 plan had won statewide awards. Ms. Heavner reminded that decisions regarding the master plans
64 rested with the Parks and Recreation Commission. Mr. Toner said that the planning process might
65 begin in the fall at the earliest.

THE FUTURE OF OUR FORESTS: STEWARDING OUR LAND THOUGHTFULLY

67 Ms. Peterson said that nearly sixty persons were signed up for the program and that all of the
68 nearby towns would be represented.

Westledge Trail

72 Mr. Rieger moved that the agenda be amended to include discussion of a possible trail from
73 Westledge Road. Mr. Ryan seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.
74 Ms. Heavner said that the easement had been reviewed with the town attorney and that it would
75 permit a trail. She said that it would require a survey, which might cost about two thousand
76 dollars. She said that further consideration of the trail should await the completion of the open
77 space master plan. Mr. Rieger said that he thought private donations might be available to pay for
78 the survey and he wondered if Ms. Heavner's desire to wait was driven by budget considerations.
79 She replied that she was concerned that staff had many other matters to attend to and that waiting
80 for the master plan seemed to her procedurally correct.

ADJOURN

82 At 5:17 PM, Mr. Ryan moved to adjourn. Mr. Rieger seconded, and the matter was unanimously
83 approved.
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