

## Open Space Minutes

May 18, 2021

The Committee met via Zoom as scheduled with the following members present: Sarah Cammer, Brandon Kibbe, Paula Bertram, Bob Pease, Mike Toohill, Lynne Man and Ana Flavia Lockwood.

1. **Call to Order** - Chairman opened the meeting at 6:33 p.m. and read the pandemic notice as posted on the agenda.
2. **Minutes- Review and Approve 03/16/2021** – Bob Pease made a motion to approve the minutes of March 16, 2021, Lynne Man seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.
3. **Presentation from Whalom residents regarding conservation of general municipal lands at 671 West Street and 225 Pleasant Street** – David Prokowiew and Eric Hinds presented a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee which is attached and made part of these minutes. Brandon Kibbe explained that these 2 parcels of land are some of the largest town owned parcels in a heavily populated area. The Open Space plan identifies the need for equity of access to recreational open space in all areas of the Town.

The West Street parcel is approx. 40 acres of wetland and woodland with a pond. There are several existing trails on this parcel. Currently there is adequate room for a parking area for 3 or more vehicles at the trail head. This area could be expanded with the removal of dead trees. There are several rustic crossings (planks, tires etc.) on the property that need updating. Approximately 10 years ago some abutters were able to purchase a portion of this parcel to add to their existing lots. There are 2 possible access points, 1 at Pratt Street and the other at Pleasant St. Ext. Bob Pease noted it will be important to ensure access before transferring responsibility. The area identified in the presentation as “The Western Loop” is actively traveled by snowmobiles, mountain bikes and four wheelers. There is one certified vernal pool in the area of West Street, it is unclear as to whether or not it is on the Town owned property.

The Pleasant Street parcel is 66.55 acres and abuts the solar field. Approximated 40 acres of the property is fields. According to Mr. Prokowiew, the owner of the solar fields is amenable to discussing the creation of trails to allow connectivity to the West Street Parcel. This parcel lends itself to rectangular fields, identified as a need in the open space plan. A portion of this property is currently hayed. Mr. Prokowiew noted that since the pandemic many walkers are utilizing this land and the West Street parcel.

Eric and Dave indicated they would be willing to provide labor to clean up the properties and enhance access to the land. Bob Pease noted that the residents need to take an active role in transferring property to other departments and applauded Dave & Eric's efforts. Brandon Kibbe stated that first the Committee should reach out to the Selectmen and then to other departments to determine if the parcels would fill a need. If no other department sees an active need the recommendation would be to place these parcels under Conservation or Parks, or a combination thereof.

Paula Bertram made a motion to reach out to the Board of Selectmen through the Town Manager, the Planning Director and the various committees represented on the open space committee to consider these 2 parcels for open space and recreation, committee members will report back to the Open Space Committee at the next meeting. Seconded by Bob Pease. Passed unanimously by roll call vote.

4. **Update on general municipal lands at 860 Reservoir Road/725 Goodrich Street/0 Shirley Reservoir Road** – Paula informed the Committee that she has been researching town owned land on Lake Shirley. 860 Reservoir Road is clearly owned by the Town as it went through the taking process, the tax title process was begun in 1970 on the 725 Goodrich Street parcel however it does not appear it was completed. Previous ownership of several of the adjacent “owner unknown” parcels is unclear. Paula will do further research and report back to the Committee.

5. **Revision of Land Use Plans for Lane & Table Rock properties** – Bob Pease explained the Conservation Commission was looking at updating the land use policies on conservation parcels it was discovered that both these parcels indicate that bow hunting is only allowed by special permit. Bow Hunting is allowed by right on all other conservation property. The Commission will seek to revise this policy in the future which will require a public hearing.
6. **Questions for Town Clerk about minutes and town meeting actions** – Bob Pease told the Committee that he will be meeting with the Town Clerk to research Town meeting actions on parcels listed as general municipal land. Brandon requested that Bob look for the actual town meeting vote on the Woodruff parcel and the Town Meeting actions for 225 Pleasant Street.
7. **Future Meeting with Assessor** - Bob noted that several of the parcels currently identified as owner unknown could be taken as land of low value and he will be meeting with the Assessor to discuss. The Committee will continue the process of reviewing and prioritizing parcels.
8. **MassGIS Training** – Lynne Man has signed up for the MassGIS training session and requested that any member has specific questions that they would like to ask, please email them to her.
9. **Committee administration (terms, membership)** – Brandon said that he reached out to Adam Burney and currently there are not terms for open space members. Some of the committee members are appointed by their various commissions/committees/boards (i.e. Planning Board, Conservation, Parks). Current at large members are Brandon, Mike, Lynne and Sarah. Sarah questioned if we want to establish a more formal process with terms, it may be prudent to see if other people would like to serve. Ana noted that the Board of Selectmen have been discussing the nominating and reappointment process. Paula commented that she believes continuity is important. Brandon informed the Committee that Eric Hinds has submitted a talent bank expressing interest in servicing on Open Space. Bob noted that the Committee would welcome Eric’s input as a non-voting member.
10. **Adjourn** – Paula made a motion to adjourn at 8:34 p.m., seconded by Lynne motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Bertram