

Open Space Meeting Minutes

September 22, 2020

Committee Members Present: Karin Menard, Paula Bertram, Brandon Kibbe, Mike Toohill, Sarah Cammer, Lynne Man, Bob Pease.

1. **Call to Order** - Meeting called to order by the Chairman at 6:03 p.m. Chairman read the notice regarding remote meetings which was included on the duly posted agenda.
2. **Review and approve minutes from 8 /20 /2020 meeting** - The minutes were unanimously accepted by roll call vote with the condition that the spelling of Lynne Man's name be corrected.
3. **250 Howard Street Update and Alternatives Discussion with Prospective Buyers**- Previously the Open Space Committee had made a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen to exercise the Town's right of first refusal. Brandon Kibbe attended the Board of Selectmen meeting on 9/15/20 to discuss this property. At that time Cesira Newcomb and Joe Normandin, prospective owners, indicated they were amenable to a solution that would allow development of the property and conveyance of a portion of the property to the Community. Brandon walked the property on Friday with the prospective owners. Records indicate that in 1833 the property was abandoned for agricultural use and became forested. Brandon shared a map with the Committee that included several possible property line delineations. If the Town were to acquire 100 feet from the Mulpus Brook, that would equate to 2.3 Acres, 200 feet would be 2.74 Acres and 250 ft would be 3.40 Acres. Following discussion, Bob Pease made a motion to recommend to the Selectmen that they enter into an agreement with the prospective buyers to acquire by gift a portion of the property extending 200 feet beyond the Mulpus Brook. Paula Bertram seconded. Passed unanimously by roll call vote.

The warrant for the special town meeting closes next week, therefore, a placeholder article for acquisition of this property has been placed on the warrant. In order to pass over the article an agreement with the prospective buyers must be reached as soon as possible. Bob Pease will reach out to the Town Manager and Town Counsel. Joe Normandin informed the Committee that they will have three of the bounds verified and develop an ANR plan. Granite markers are proposed to delineate the property line following the gift of property to the Town.

4. **671 West Street Parcel - Other General Municipal Lands Next Steps** – Committee received correspondence from the Town Manager regarding several parcels that abutters are interested in acquiring:
 - 51 Parmenter Road: Corner lot about .3 acres that has access to Lake Shirley.
 - 247 Highland Street Rear: 3.7 acres that was taken through tax title. A resident on Chestnut Street inquired about purchasing this property.
 - 860 Reservoir Road: An abutter inquired about purchasing this 6.7 acre parcel. This parcel was taken through tax title
 - 690 Goodrich Street Rear: An abutter would like to purchase. This is a 3.7 acre parcel that was taken through tax title.
 - 671 West Street: An abutter wishes to purchase a 100 x 150 foot section of this large parcel. The town voted many years ago to sell off pieces of this large parcel to make it more uniform.

Bob Pease informed the Committee that the Conservation Committee would like to see two parcels

conveyed to the Conservation Commission; 111 Mulpus Road Rear which is a 6 acre landlocked parcel abutting conservation land and 970 NW Townsend Road Rear a 3.2 acre landlocked parcel surrounded by 166 acres of conservation land. Committee reviewed parcels. Bob Pease made a motion to recommend that the Board of Selectmen convey said parcels, Lynne Man seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

The Committee reviewed the 671 West Street parcel request by an abutter for conveyance of 100 x 150 foot portion of the parcel, this conveyance would not affect frontage. Bob Pease noted that the Conservation Commission is interested in the remainder of the parcel. Brandon informed the Committee that there is an article that was voted several years ago to allow the Selectmen to convey portions of this parcel. Paula Bertram suggested that the Open Space Committee obtain a copy of the article. Lynne asked how land becomes "general municipal land". Brandon explained that the bulk of the property is obtained through nonpayment of taxes, the 671 West Street parcel was purchased by the Town for a school which was never built. The Town has conveyed small portions of this parcel in the past. Bob Pease noted that it is not uncommon for abutters to come forward and the Town Manager forwards such requests to the Open Space Committee, Conservation and Parks for their recommendation.

Dave Passios noted that the Highland Street property may allow access to other conservation land. Sarah Cammer commented that while it is key to preserve existing conservation land it is also important that we consider other areas of Town that do not have conservation land/open space.

The general consensus of the committee was that we need to take a comprehensive look at land classified as "General Municipal Land (teal colored parcels in the Open Space Plan) and define a process to determine what land should be retained by the Town and what land could potentially be conveyed. Therefore, the consensus of the group was to act on the 671 West Street request but to delay action on others until such time as a process for such requests is developed. Bob Pease made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to convey the 100 x 150 foot portion of the parcel to the abutter and defer action on the other requests. Karin Menard seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Bob Pease made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board that they empower the Open Space Committee to work with various departments to examine all undesignated municipal lands in in order to make recommendations on their potential use or possible conveyance. Paula Bertram seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Paula Bertram commented that she would like to visit the various parcels, other members agreed. Sarah Cammer noted that there is an undesignated parcel on Fairview Road that connects to 408 Lancaster which could offer access to the Catacunemaug Brook. Brandon noted that parcels that are owned by the Town can be visited, just inform neighbors/abutters if questioned that you are on the Open Space Committee reviewing Town owned land.

Bob Pease left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

At the October meeting the Committee will review the list of undesignated municipal land and then extend an invitation to other Boards to discuss.

5. **Bright Farms Connection Update** – Brandon informed the Committee that he had walked the property with the developers representative and they are amenable to allowing continued trail access via conveyance of a portion of the parcel to the Town. The northeast corner of the parcel would allow connection of the Raino and Saliba conservation parcels via an existing skid path. Karin Menard made a motion that the Town Boards see acquisition of the northeast corner of the land by gift to provide connectivity between the Raino and Saliba parcels. Paula seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.
6. **Call for Economic Development Committee Nominations** – Lynne Man indicated she may have someone who would be interested in serving, she will reach out to them. Karin Menard indicated she may consider participating if we are unable to find another volunteer. Paula Bertram will send out the charge to Lynn and Karin.
7. **Public Comment** – Dave Passios informed the Committee that over the Fall/Winter the Parks Commission will be working on development of a master plan for Marshall Park. They plan on investigating grant opportunities and reaching out to the community. Brandon noted a couple of grant opportunities that may be of interested the PARC Grant, a 2 year grant, the 1st year devoted to planning and the second to implementation and the Fields Pond Grant. Members of the Committee offered their assistance in putting together grant applications. Dave also stated that the Parks Commission will be investigating the possibility of community gardens.

Sarah Cammer suggested the Town investigate grant opportunities for sidewalks. Paula noted that there are grant opportunities that may be available through MRPC for assistance with sidewalks.

The next meeting of the Open Space Committee is scheduled for 10/13/20 at 6:00 p.m. (May change based on availability of Zoom license).

At 7:32 p.m. Karin Menard made a motion to adjourn. Paula Bertram seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Bertram