

## **Open Space Minutes, 11-2-2005**

### **Attendees**

Anne Madden (chair)	Patricia Reeser	
Don Bourquard	Mickey Culver	
Dawne Fusco	Mike Mokrzycki	Jean Lambert, associate

### **Topics covered**

- Minutes of 10/5/05
- CPA update
- Mullen update
- Management planning, stewardship
- Next meeting: Dec. 7 (or sooner if necessary re Mullen)

### **Minutes of 10/5/05**

Minutes of the Oct. 5 meeting were approved unanimously.

### **CPA update**

The committee briefly began discussing a campaign for approval of the Community Preservation Act in the spring 2006 balloting.

### **Mullen update**

Annie advised the town still is waiting for the engineering report from Cammett. The committee's understanding is the town has until Dec. 15 to purchase the property.

The committee discussed potential uses of the Mullen land. Consensus is that since the Land Bond would fund the vast majority of the purchase, OSC should make a recommendation for use after the town receives the engineering report. (If necessary, the committee will meet to review the engineering report before its next regularly scheduled monthly meeting.)

Moved and seconded: That the Open Space Committee doesn't opine on the worthiness of the purchase of the Mullen property in advance of receipt of the engineering report, but if it is purchased it should be used to fulfill the town's 40B obligations. Approved unanimously.

### **Management planning, stewardship**

Mickey Culver gave an overview of Essex County Greenbelt's approach to land management and stewardship:

- Greenbelt has paid staff
- annual work plan for each property
- observe land, make sure not being encroached on or otherwise misused; husbanding/maintenance as required

Mickey noted that Greenbelt isn't aggressive in encouraging public use of most of its properties, and said the town likely would be more interested in this sort of communication.

He said the most important factor is having a management plan for each property. He noted that Greenbelt uses a template for drafting these plans. Dawne Fusco showed the committee a one-page template.

Don Bourquard also noted that Greenbelt has a system of stewards for its properties, to monitor the land and identify issues as they arise.

Annie Madden saw three action items for the OSC:

1. inventory of lands of open space interest (an OSC subcommittee made headway on this last year, and Don distributed and reviewed a printout from the table they'd developed, listing the relevant properties and their attributes)
2. identify overall goals for these properties
3. develop a template for land management plans for individual properties, possibly prioritizing larger ones first. These may be grouped geographically in the same way as is done in the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Annie said the management/stewardship initiative should be very holistic, not just focusing on trails – for example, some properties need annual mowing, some need tree work, some require trash removal, and others may require only periodic inspection.

Patricia Reeser recommended separate templates for management plans for different kinds of properties: uplands, meadow, waterfront, etc.

The committee reviewed recommendations in the “Managing Conservation Land” book.

Mickey suggested complementing a stewardship program with a database of the land inventory, ideally available publicly on the OSC's web site. Among the uses for this database:

- townspeople can easily view the inventory and drill down to maps and other details about individual properties
- OSC could easily generate a list of maintenance requirements for town-owned properties, as needed by the DPW, stewards and other interested parties

Mike Mokrzycki said he would work with Mickey on setting up this online database.

Annie suggested the committee identify as pilot projects a small number of varied properties in different parts of town on which to begin developing management plans. Annie also will work to develop templates for the management plans.

**Other:**

- Don reported that the Conservation Commission (Jay Smith) approved the Hilltop Circle area group's work proposal for maintaining the ConCom portion of the Craven area land, as discussed in the Oct. 5 OSC meeting.
- Mike reported that the pastor of St. Ann's Church advised the congregation recently that a recommendation had gone to the archbishop of Boston to consolidate the three parishes in West Newbury, Groveland and Merrimac into one, with all three churches remaining open but with one priest serving all three. Unknown yet which rectory this priest would live in and whether this might result

in the archdiocese selling the St. Ann's rectory property, which is on the OSC's priority parcels list.

- Don provided an update on the trail easement planned along a discontinued section of Kimball Road as part of the Whitegate Farms development. Per the formal and recorded Planning Board decision, the easement must be registered as part of the deed before work can begin on the project. Don talked to Pat Kelly, who said she would work on the easement but not for a while.

**Next meeting**

Wednesday, Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m., unless the OSC needs to post a meeting before then to review the engineering report for the Mullen property.