

West Newbury Open Space Committee MINUTES

Wednesday, January 18, 2012

Present: Barry LaCroix, Felicity Beech, Don Bourquard, Dawne Fusco, Jennifer Germain, Steve Greason, Patricia Reeser, and Jean Lambert

Guests: Heather and Christine Conner: Christine, who was accompanied by her mother Heather, is a student at Essex Aggie observing our meeting as part of a school project in her Forest Ecology class.

Alex Ing: Alex is an aspiring Eagle Scout attending the meeting to present a proposal.

Gary Bill: Present only briefly.

The meeting began at 7:43 P.M. (Felicity, Dawne, and Patricia joined the group at 8:05 after a meeting on the Sullivan property.)

1. **Minutes** - The November minutes were accepted. (Don moved to accept them and Jennifer seconded the motion.) October minutes were accepted as amended right before the end of the meeting.

A schedule for minute taking was agreed upon for the first quarter of 2012: January-Jean, February-Felicity, March-Dawne.

2. **Presentation by Alex Ing** - Alex presented a plan for an orienteering course he would like to develop at Mill Pond and Riverbend for his Eagle Scout project. He explained orienteering to the group and the courses he would install with bearings, directions, pacing, and markers. He noted that his markers would be different from existing ones and that there would be six courses: two beginners, two intermediate, and two advanced.

The committee asked questions about his plans and raised concerns that Mill Pond and Riverbend would not be the best places to implement such courses, even though those were the areas Alex was familiar with. Since he has two years to complete this project, the committee agreed that Alex should consider and explore other West Newbury trail venues and get back to the committee on his thinking following his exploration.

3. **Discussion of Priority Parcels**

Walker - Barry updated the group on this property noting that Greenbelt has made an updated offer which includes CPA funding, an offer to which the Walkers have not yet responded. The committee discussed its role in supporting acquisition of this property.

Society of St. John the Evangelist/Schifano - Barry updated the group on a meeting last Friday concerning the SSJE property. Felicity also attended this meeting. On the southern parcel, with a well-field and Water Department easement, the Brothers want to put in solar panels and formalize trails. They also want to protect land on the northern parcel and are concerned about the neighboring Schifano property which is currently for sale. Barry and Felicity will report again on the SSJE property at a later time.

Sullivan - Patricia reported that the Sullivan Committee met together a number of times, including in executive session, and with Greenbelt and the owners. TPL is interested in spearheading a multi-use project for the Sullivan property. The BOS has approved this.

4. Other Parcels

Kimball - The committee discussed the foreclosure of this property. We will continue to monitor this situation and believe it is adequately protected by its APR.

Brown Spring Farm - The group discussed the recent listing of this property and remains concerned that it is contiguous to the Schifano property.

5. **Budget Request** - The group discussed the committee's budget needs for the upcoming fiscal year. Barry noted that key needs were money for trail marking and trail map printing as well as money for events and outreach. Barry will put a budget together that includes an increase from last year given priority expenses.
6. **Winter Event** - The committee discussed possible open space events for winter or early spring. The consensus was to hold off on events right now, given all the other open space matters needing attention currently.
7. **G.A.R. Library Open Space/Land Use Exhibit** - Barry commended our exhibit in the library. The group agreed that it might be good to provoke more thought about open space at spring Town Meeting through supplying facts and other information.
8. **Agricultural Commissions Right To Farm Law** - Patricia highlighted the importance of having this law in our town. She noted that the law could expand the preservation of farm land in the current political environment and that the state gives APR money if the town has a Right-To-Farm law. The group discussed the law as a statement about being farm-friendly and speculated about who might be advocates of the law in West Newbury. Barry suggested this would be a good topic to explore further.

9. Trails

Brake Hill Extensions - Barry commented that Brake Hill is well used and that we did a good job here. He suggested extending trails in this system and starting a Brake Hill stewardship program. Barry asked Don to flag a new trail here.

Ocean Meadows - Steve showed a map of Ocean Meadow trails and reported on the development of this trail system. The group discussed how to move this trail system forward.

Topics deferred to a future meeting because of lack of time: River Meadow access, enforcement of trail easements, GPS Mill Pond, and Town Meeting Report.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Lambert