

West Newbury Open Space Committee

MINUTES

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Present: Barry LaCroix, Don Bourquard, Jennifer Germain, Patricia Reeser, Annie Madden, Jean Lambert, and Steve Greason.

Guests: Judy Gore, Boxford Open Land Trust; Ed Becker and Mickey Culver, Greenbelt; Will Culver, Jeremy Baker, and Mark Baker, Alexander Hamilton, Town residents.

The meeting began shortly after 7:30 P.M

1. **Land Trust Discussion:** After our guests were introduced, the Committee discussed the possibility and benefits of establishing an independent/private land trust in West Newbury.

Barry noted that the concept fits with Open Space objectives.

Ed Becker, Executive Director of Essex County Greenbelt, a regional land trust comprised of 34 cities and towns indicated that because of Greenbelt's presence, there were not a lot of land trusts like BOLT. However, he indicated that a local land trust can respond to needs in a way that Greenbelt cannot. Private, charitable groups can have the flexibility, focus, and ability to take risks that a town cannot.

Ed also posed two baseline questions regarding starting a land trust:

- 1) Is there a need to be filled, particularly a specific project, that is now not filled by Greenbelt or another similar entity?
- 2) How would the trust sustain itself over time?

Ed noted here that a land trust does not need permanent staff since work can be done by volunteers, but that thought needs to be given to matters such as how the trust would hold conservation restrictions in perpetuity.

Ed also shared two helpful resources the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition and the Land Trust Alliance (LTA.org).

Ed further indicated Greenbelt would work with us to help establish a land trust or attend another meeting to discuss land trusts further.

A second guest, Judy Gore of the Boxford Open Land Trust (BOLT - formerly BTA or Boxford Trails Association - stated that fundraising for a local land trust was almost easier because people were more willing to give if they knew the money would stay in town. She described BOLT, which started as a trail preservation organization, as having a 15 member volunteer board and 420 members, with 350 dues paying members included in that number (\$25 annually or \$40 for a family). Funds come from fund raising events. The group does groundwork and awareness to help land-

related articles pass in town meeting. They are accredited by the Land Trust Alliance, an accreditation of proper standards, practices, and ethics, which is renewed every 5 years. BOLT does not work with Essex County Trails Association. Judy further noted that Boxford has no open space committee, but has a land committee that keeps track of land and investigates buying it.

Judy recommended West Newbury establish a land trust to protect our beautiful open spaces.

Other Key points from that discussion included:

- A local land trust can complement Greenbelt activities; for example, through partnership on land purchases.
 - A local land trust could help West Newbury move forward. The Town would need to be involved but people may prefer to give land to a trust rather than the Town.
 - State help is available through grants. Greenbelt can help in this area, even writing grants.
 - Starting a land trust is not difficult. It is a 5013C charitable organization requiring a committee and certain paperwork. Greenbelt can help.
2. **Trial Access Maintenance** - Steve introduced Boy Scout and Eagle Scout candidate Jeremy Baker and his father Mark Baker. Jeremy, who will undertake marking Riverbend trails for better public access, shared his plan with the Committee. He will direct a group of scouts from his troop and other volunteers who will mark three trails and trailheads at Riverbend and Page as well as the Indian River trail with markers and posts, using the same process and standards used at Mill Pond. The Committee pledged its support of Jeremy in a unanimous vote and further discussed signage, the need for BOS and Concom permission for putting stakes in the ground, the time constraints given winter's arrival, Jeremy's need to finish before turning 18 in April, and the Boy Scout Council approval process. This project will be financed by donations and possibly a portion of the OSC budget. Barry signed the paperwork Jeremy required.
3. **Additional Trail Marking - Species Descriptions** - Steve indicated that Alexander Hamilton has proposed marking trees on the Indian River trail with their species and a description. This marking could also enhance nature study for Page elementary students. Barry noted that the BOS and ConCom would need to approve this plan. Alex said that he would speak to conservation agent Jay Smith about it and that the project would be funded by an anonymous donation. Steve also recognized Alex for cleaning up Riverbend trails after they were heavily damaged during an ice storm last year.
4. **Trail Easements** - Don reported that he was working on a trail easement key piece on the newly subdivided Barry property on Coffin Street. Securing such an easement would eliminate a gap between trails on the Page School property and one leading to Coffin Street.

5. **Educational Outreach Sub-Committee** - Barry updated the Committee on the meeting with the Citizens for a Stronger Community on Thursday, November 12th. Barry's goal was to help the group understand the true costs of residential development, that not all municipal land is open space, and that land purchases are funded through a variety of mechanisms including agreements and partnerships with organizations like Greenbelt.
6. **Other Business**
 - a. **Management Plan for Town-Owned Land** - Given the lateness of the hour, Barry suggested deferring discussion of updating the management plan for Town-owned land. The rest of the Committee agreed.
 - b. **Approval of Minutes:** The minutes for the October 21st meeting were approved, as amended.
 - c. **Ethics Forms** - Barry asked for the signed ethics forms distributed at the October meeting and reminded those who had not returned the forms to him to do so.
 - d. **Map Payment** - The Committee approved an expenditure of \$37.50 for an open space/trail map that Don had created for the CSC meeting. Don will get the required signatures for reimbursement.
 - e. **December Meeting** - The December OSC meeting was canceled because it fell too near the Christmas holiday.

The meeting adjourned at 9:43 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Lambert