

West Newbury Open Space Committee

MINUTES

Format revised to reflect Open Meeting Law guidelines.

Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017

Present: Jessica Azenaro, Don Bourquard, Brad Buschur, John Dodge, Steve Greason, Jean Lambert, Wendy Reed, Patricia Reeser and Marley Switzer (your scribe)

Guests: Kathy Feehery, Tom Flaherty, Rose and Frank Vetere

The meeting began at 7 p.m., in the second floor meeting room, West Newbury Town Hall.

1. **Park & Rec Plan for Dunn Property:** Tom Flaherty of the Parks & Recreation Commission spoke on plans to expand town recreation on the Dunn Fields. He recalled the commission conducted a survey in 2010, polling resident opinion for what should be located at the Bachelor Street facility. Flaherty said there were 175 respondents to 20+ “very limited choices...Most wouldn’t fit there.” An indoor pool was at the top of the replies that included tennis courts. “It [survey] was too pointed, so nothing groundbreaking was learned,” he said.

Bill Bachrach is spearheading this newest plan for Parks & Rec to address growing needs of the West Newbury Youth League. The WNYL has a minimal budget and represents all non-school town sports. Identified needs include: another playing field (all-purpose athletic); two tennis courts (currently there are no town-owned courts so residents use school courts); and parking to serve these. Parks & Rec is recommending these amenities be located on Dunn Fields along Chase Street. Flaherty said there also is support for an enclosed dog park and a fitness trail at Dunn Fields.

Jack Duggan, a professor at Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, will oversee a project for senior students to lay out tennis courts and a playing field. Parks & Recreation Commission will request \$1,000 from Board of Selectmen to cover costs of this “minimal approach” to developing Dunn Fields.

OSC members raised questions about the need for an additional playing field, pointing to times when not all Pipestave fields are in use. There also was some concern about West Newbury providing playing fields for other towns. Brad Buschur questioned the comparative costs of the DPW maintaining a grass field vs artificial turf. He estimated a turf field 120 yards long and 70 yards wide could cost \$750,000. Parking at Dunn Fields was another concern.

2. **Coffin Street Solar Proposal:** Abutters Rose & Frank Vetere of Coffin Street and Kathy Feehery of Riverrun Farm voiced their objections to the SWEB Development proposed solar project for the Beaucher land. Among concerns: 1) the proposed 5-megawatt capacity; 2) the solar field elevated above abutting homes, which could increase runoff; 3) the clearing of some 30 acres of trees; 4) the effect on sensitive spaces and wildlife; 5) long-existing trails to be cut off; 6) questionable benefits to the town (10 percent discount on power purchased from National Grid).

OSC members acknowledged the scope of the project must be large enough to be profitable for the solar operation, but were skeptical about the fate of open land in the tract that later could be sold for development. Can it be protected? Is this an appropriate place for a solar field rather than an industrial zone? Proposal is on Dec. 4 ConCom agenda.

3. **Drake's Landing Status:** Engineering delays follow news that the Living Wall option to facilitate the proposed road grade transition into the development is too costly. Engineers are working on other ways to grade the land that abuts wetlands from the entrance. Brad reports that trees 36" in diameter will be cut to allow changes in fill allocation. Some members have concerns that stormwater drainage could discharge into woods.
4. **Update on Trails Projects:** Members support the need for Best Practices information about trail planning, construction, and development. Brad will send the committee the state trails guidelines, with the goal to get buy-in from the Planning Board for best practices sieve analysis for trail construction.
5. **Update on Priority Parcels:** Informal discussion of many parcels on the market.
6. **CPC Hearing on Nov. 30:** Jean Lambert suggested the OSC should be represented in an informal way at the upcoming annual Community Preservation Committee meeting.
7. **Minutes:** The assembled members unanimously approved the minutes of the Oct. 18, 2017 regular meeting after minor corrections.
8. **Update OSRP:** Scheduling conflicts will make it difficult to hold work sessions through the end of year, but Mondays at 2 p.m. should be available for those who can attend.
9. **Goals and Objectives:** Time ran short before this could be discussed.
10. **Nuts and Bolts:**
 - Dan Carlat has created a FB page for a grassroots group, West Newbury Residents Against Overdevelopment, that has been received with much enthusiasm.
11. **Next Regular Meeting:** Wednesday, Dec. 20, 7 p.m., in second floor meeting room, West Newbury Town Hall

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlene Switzer

Cc: Michael McCarron, Town Hall records
Steve Greason, Town Open Space website