

**Minutes Open Space Committee,
January 22, 2014 (Amended)
7:30 pm**

Present: Steve Greason, Jean Lambert, Dawne Fusco, Patricia Reeser, scribe

First order of business was to hear a presentation and Q & A from Jack Shepherd, a representative of the State Access Board, about a proposed boat ramp and expanded parking lot at Church Street and Ferry Lane Park. Mr. Shepherd cancelled because of inclement weather. About twenty five members of the public attended the meeting.

Steve Greason summarized the current state proposal as follows: 12 parking spaces for boat trailer, 9-10 car spaces and 120 feet of dock. The parking would be located in a lower closed portion of Church Street and Ferry Lane Park ("FLP"). FLP would be redeveloped into a park with a science walk containing interpretive panels (the "State Boat Ramp Proposal"). According to the State, a cartop access ramp with only one lane of spaces along Church Street is not favored by the State because handicap access would need to be included in the project making the cost exceed what State willing to pay for car top only access. State thinks dock is safer because of currents. It would be possible to designate the area as a public fishing area (instead of car top boat access), lay gravel which would meet handicap access criteria for this use. Gravel area could also be used (but not officially designated) for car top boat access.

Although the State would do the permitting and construction of the State Boat Ramp, the Town would be required to maintain the dock and area on an ongoing basis.

Public comments were entertained which are summarized below:

Neighbors and abutters want Ferry Park untouched or improved on a small scale for car top boat access only; there should be a visioning process to hear what the Town wants rather than what the State wants to build; an article from the Daily News March 18, 1998 was read quoting Jack Shepherd as saying the river was too shallow for boats at this area and should only be used for fishing.; objection was made to the use of the site by non-residents and expense of maintaining the area; boat traffic encourages erosion and should not be increased by building more access for motorized boats; it was noted that the views of Rocks Village Bridge and the Merrimac River to and from the West Newbury side of the river are extremely scenic and should be preserved; the Open Space Survey of 2009 was cited as showing that preserving scenic views and rural character received higher priority by number of votes than river access; noted that the type of river access desired was not specified in the 2009 Open Space Survey; areas highlighted for exploration of river access in the 2009 OSRP are all owned by the Town; further development in the FLP area is undesirable since Bridge and Church Streets are already very heavily travelled collector streets; adequate motor boat put ins already exist in Haverhill, Newburyport and arrangements might be made to share the Groveland river access at the Town launch; existing boating groups already use the Groveland marina; warnings were made about ceding control of the area to the State without Town oversight of the use; unregulated waters of West Newbury already have heavy boat traffic; concerns were raised about storage of the dock out of season and cost of maintenance; it was

noted the area is one of the few places for fly fishing in the water and motorized boating in the area would interfere with that use; already heavy traffic in the area would be further exacerbated by the presence of vehicles with trailers; it was noted that the State Access Board provided funds to the Town of Dedham in 2013 for a car top boat access ramp in the Charles River; many who were present opposing the State Boat Ramp Proposal spoke in favor of a limited car top ramp improvement; it was suggested that the Town decide what kind of boat access was wanted before considering improvements, if any, to FLP.

Steve Greason reported that the Groveland Harbormaster suggested that the sharing of Groveland's boat ramp be raised with the Groveland Selectmen. Steve also reported that Gary Bill would store the dock and that Gary thought the cost would be several hundred dollars per year.

After discussion of what role the OSC should play in this issue, the Committee voted a) to recommend to the Selectmen that the Board of Selectmen create a task force of stakeholders to evaluate what the Town wanted with respect to river access from the Church Street State owned parcel; and b) that the task force make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen with respect to the task force findings. The public attending the meeting for this matter left at 9:15.

Steve Greason reported as follows:

Crane Pond WMA Map: Patricia Huckery from Div. of Wildlife and Fisheries, was supportive of having West Newbury publish and post a new trail map created by Steve.

Society of St John the Evangelist is proposing granting an easement to the Town from the south east corner of the SSJE parcel to Main Street. They are working with the W.N. Water Department to allow a trail within the water department 400 ft. buffer from the well.

The Con Com issued an order of conditions for the Riverbend Project. \$2000. In engineering CPA funds are to be paid when stamped plans from Weatherall issue. Following issuance of plans the Project will go out to bid.

The Committee voted to recommend the Board of Selectmen exercise the right of first refusal on the Sullivan north property in order to give the Town time to exercise due diligence on uses of the waterfront property.

December 11, 2013 minutes were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50.