

West Newbury Open Space Committee
Minutes of the meeting
Wednesday, March 19, 2014

Chairman Steve Greason called the Open Space Committee meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of the 1910 building with Jennifer Germain, Dawne Fusco, Alice O'Leary, Jean Lambert, Elisa Grammer (associate), and Mike Sabulis (associate) in attendance.

After hearing no public comment, the Committee addressed its agenda.

Crane Pond Multi-Town Meeting

Chairman Greason described a meeting planned to be held in Groveland's Veasey Memorial Park on March 26. Open Space Committees in the towns of West Newbury, Groveland, Georgetown, Rowley, and Boxford will each have about 20 minutes to describe their aspect of the Crane Pond Wildlife Management Area, which is owned by the State. This is a link in a Rail Trail system running throughout the East Coast. The idea is to have better signage and public access to the trails. Mr. Greason is planning to have a poster regarding West Newbury's part of this.

The Committee generally decided to put this on the OSC website and to reach out to ECTA, Essex Greenbelt, State Fish & Game, and West Newbury stakeholders interested in the trails to inform them of this meeting.

Ferry Lane Park and Boat Access

Chairman Greason reported that the Ferry Landing Task Force met on March 5 with the Harbor Committee (whose interest in this matter was not overwhelming) and Steve Shepherd (a neighbor in the area). The Task Force discussed the group's membership and objectives and consideration of alternate sites. After the meeting, Mr. Greason sent a letter (yet unanswered) to the Board of Selectmen asking for an expansion of the Task Force membership and a focus on Ferry Landing, inasmuch as a lengthy search for alternatives has already been undertaken with no success. Mr. Greason further noted that Plan B (a less expansive project that would largely leave the Ferry Landing triangle alone) is still ongoing, but because of the snow and ice, the State has not been able to come to the site for further evaluation.

Regarding the citizens' petition and Article seeking a vote at Town Meeting to "set aside for conservation purposes as a passive green Park," a triangle of Town-owned land that, with this vote, "hereafter shall be formally designated as 'Ferry Lane Park' and shall be subject to the provisions of Article 97 of the Massachusetts State Constitution in perpetuity," Elisa Grammer summarized the discussion at Monday's FinCom meeting. At that meeting, proponents explained that Article 97 requires a 2/3 vote of each chamber of Massachusetts' legislature to change the passive park designation.

The Committee generally concluded that it is important that those at Town Meeting 1) gain an accurate understanding of the facts (through a poster, a newspaper article and/or a fact sheet to be prepared by Mr. Greason and vetted by the OSC); 2) know that a Task Force is underway to consider scaled down options that would give the Town greater control; and 3) realize that the State may take unfavorable unilateral action, such as installing a chain link fence along the waterline.

Riverbend Bridges Project

After OSC signed off on a \$2K invoice for engineering services that provided an officially stamped engineering plan, Mr. Greason described expected costs and budgeting. He explained the benefits of winning an award that that will give an extra week of AmeriCorps construction labor. He further reported that a walk of the affected areas has been scheduled with Community Preservation at 1 p.m. on April 3, starting at the Millpond building.

It was generally agreed that this award is a source of significant savings and should be highlighted at the FinCom and Town Meeting presentations in support of the \$7K of CPA funds sought to pay AmeriCorps.

Atherton Parcel Conservation Acquisition

The Committee discussed Town Counsel's views about the value of the Atherton property with no paved road and the OSC concern that a wealthy individual could rebuild the road and the Selectmen could vote to reopen Pikes Bridge Road as an automotive roadway. Mr. Greason noted that Greenbelt will have an appraisal next week, which should address this issue.

The Committee generally noted that a planned Town walk of the Atherton property trails should be scheduled for a date other than Easter Sunday but prior to Town Meeting.

Library Exhibit

It was generally agreed that a new exhibit at the Library highlighting West Newbury trails will focus on the Atherton property and will be prepared by Jean Lambert for the second week of April or so.

The Committee adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Elisa Grammer