

West Newbury Open Space Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2018

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

Absent: Don Bourquard

Guests: Vanessa Johnson-Hall, Essex County Greenbelt; John McGrath, Main Street; Dan Carlat, Old Wharf Road.

The meeting began at 7:15 p.m. in the Second Floor Meeting Room, West Newbury Town Hall.

Brown Spring Farm

Vanessa Johnson-Hall, assistant director of land conservation for Essex County Greenbelt, updated the OSC on details of a potential agreement to purchase Brown Spring Farm that would preserve the land in agriculture. She said a Purchase & Sale was expected within two weeks, after which Greenbelt would begin fundraising for its share of a \$350,000 Conservation Restriction. Patricia Reeser said she advocates for use of Community Preservation Act funds to cover the town's portion. The CR on about 9 acres at the corner of Main Street and Norino Drive would include the farm stand, and would eliminate the potential creation of three additional house lots. Vanessa said she has proposed about an acre or less of the area around the residence to be excluded from the CR. The new owners would be permitted to rebuild or relocate the barn, which is in poor condition, and construct other buildings in the permissible building area.

Greenbelt is preparing the written offer to purchase. Mechanics of the \$800,000 sale call for the conservation purchasers to pay \$450,000, and Greenbelt and the town to share the \$350,000 cost for a CR. The potential new owners plan to practice organic farming on the land. They are putting their current house on the market, which must be sold before they can purchase the farm property.

Patricia Reeser made the following motion, seconded by John Dodge: *"Patricia Reeser, on behalf of the Open Space Committee, is authorized to co-sign an application with the Essex County Greenbelt to the Community Preservation Committee for funding \$200,000 in Community Preservation Act funds to be used for the purchase of a Conservation Restriction on Brown Spring Farm."*

Subsequently, Patricia amended her motion, seconded by John, to state: *"Priscilla Reeser also is to be authorized to co-sign the application for project eligibility (as well as for funding) to the CPC."* The motion, as amended, was unanimously approved.

There was discussion of measures to draft a warrant article for the Spring Town Meeting, as well as pending deadlines for warrant articles and requests for CPC funds. John McGrath of Main Street offered historical perspective about Brown Spring Farm. He also made suggestions for navigating the steps to bring the measure to Town Meeting.

New Resident Group

Jean Lambert told members that a group of residents interested in preventing overdevelopment in town is deciding on a name. She was concerned that the use of “open space” in that name could create confusion with the town Open Space Committee. Dan Carlat is representing the loosely organized group that responded to his Facebook comments about development and loss of open space. He said the meeting discussion convinced him to brainstorm other names for the group.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2018, at 7 p.m., Second Floor Meeting Room, West Newbury Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlene Switzer

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