

TOWN OF ACTON
Open Space Committee
Date: Friday, June 9, 2017
Time: 7:30 AM
Place: Acton Town Hall - Room 9

Committee Members: Andy Magee, Terry Maitland, Jeff Clymer, Matt Mostoller, Katie Green, Dick Hatfield, Barbara Epstein, Tom Tidman

Visitors: Bob Callahan, Judy Werner, Joe Cooney, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Joe Will, Peter Darlow, Fred Seward, Franny Osman, Dave Marshall and Will Hill

Andy called the meeting to order at 7:30 AM.

Item1:Minutes of May 12, 2017

Jeff moved to approve the minutes of May 12; Matt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Item 2: Update – Piper Lane

Magoon (Piper Road): Frannie has maintained interest in this project. She noted that Selby had told her the appraisal of the back lot had not been done yet. There is a lot of neighborhood interest. Andy asked that she coordinate closely with Selby since he is actively working this project, and to be sensitive in reaching out to concerned parties.

Item 3: Update – Stonefield Farm

There is a 500 gal. oil tank on the property, near the living quarters. This could be a liability and Dick noted that this will have to be determined for anyone interested in the property. Andy has discussed this with New Entry. A Pro bono volunteer has provided a first level analysis for New Entry. However, with the owners preferring to have the Town purchase the CR and continue farming the land and selling their operation later, New Entry has halted their assessment efforts for the time being.

Will asked for more information on New Entry. Andy gave a brief overview of their operation. "New Entry" is a non-profit agricultural group that is looking for a headquarters. This group provides training for people interested in farming. It

also encourages farming and good farming practices. They offer a course in business planning focused on helping farmers build a business plan. They offer the use of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre parcels to help the new farmer get started. They also run a CSA to which all the farmers in the program contribute. This kind of incubator training is being offered around the country and Tufts University was a fiscal sponsor, and still offers non-financial support. The group is currently located in Lowell and rents land in Dracut. Their existing circumstances result in being spread around multiple sites, so they would like to be centrally located. This property is ideal since it offers agricultural resources and is near public transportation, the train station being within walking distance. “

This site is ideal for their operation. They are the “Real deal,” with 12 full time employees. They are self supporting but can go back to Tufts for more help.

Andy has advised them not to spend any money until they have a firm agreement with the owners. Ashley has prepared a draft CR and the owners are, so far, agreeable. Andy will have New Entry look over the draft as well.

The next Town Meeting is Dec. 4. The Committee’s goal is to have a presentation ready by then. Andy will contact the Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen and the CPC.

Dick asked if there would be public access to the farm. Andy said there could be some access from the ARRT but the extensive wetlands on the property minimizes any opportunity for a trail system. The current owners are not comfortable with having community farming on the property. Also, there is a possibility of costs increasing should any leakage be detected from the in-ground tank. Generally, the CPC is excited about the potential associated with this property.

Item 4: Discussion - 19 Spring Hill Road

Will developed a draft letter summarizing the issue to be sent to the Planning Board on behalf of the Committee. The letter stressed the concerns of the OSC over the possible waiver of the Single Access rule. The draft was distributed to the committee for review and discussion. A number of suggestions were made to modify the letter. Jeff pointed out that the next public hearing is scheduled for June 20. Susan mentioned that today was the deadline for staff comments. The applicant did a proof plan proposing a series of single access streets. They also made the argument that, if they tilted the cul de sac, that wouldn’t make the road longer. The committee agreed that this was more of a legal issue than an open space issue, and Town Counsel, having been contacted, has to weigh in.

Jeff pointed out that there needs to be a definition of “single access roads” and the safety issue must be addressed. Bylaws need to be amended for clarity.

Andy allowed time for the committee to review Will's letter and comment. Jeff recused himself from the review and discussion.

Will's letter cited violation of the rules for single access roads, the proximity of the property to existing and important conservation areas, and setting a dangerous and unintended precedent impacting other areas of town. The letter references both Acton 20/20 Master Plan and the OSRP of 2014-2021. The committee recommended the letter be revised to focus more directly on the concerns of the OSC, leading off with their position rather than the legal impacts. Matt suggested adding a line referencing parcels that have contributed to open space value in the town.

Will will modify the letter and send it to Andy by Monday. It's addressed to the Planning Board, and the Board of Selectman and Selby, Land Use Department will be copied.

Dick moved to accept the letter prepared by Will with the edits as representing the position of the Open Space Committee. Matt seconded the motion and the committee voted to approve the letter. Jeff abstained from voting.

Item 5: Discussion – Subdivision Workshop

The Planning Department ran a workshop the prior Wednesday evening which Susan, Andy and Tom attended. The position of Planning was to consider the PCRC development model as the by-right standard for the Town, including secondary resource considerations as part of the design standards. The workshop was favorably received by attendees with the majority of those present approving this zoning change. Andy suggested that the Planning Department should again come before the OSC. He asked Tom to invite them to the July 14 meeting for a 30 minute presentation starting at 8:00 AM.

Item 6: Multiple updates

53 River Street: The Board of Selectman voted to set up a study committee. Tom suggested contacting Jane Cerasso as a potential participant.

64 School Street: No update

Quarry Road: Stamski & McNary will be conducting another survey

Newtown Road: Tom reported that a person had come in asking about one of the lots.

Item 7: Charter Revisions and Term Expirations

The Charter is being revised to permit the addition of associate members. This revision will allow associate members to vote in instances where quorum is lacking. The Board of Selectmen need to approve.

Dick will continue his membership in the committee, and Andy will stay on as chair. He also asked that existing members please renew their terms. Jeff noted that there will be a new member from the Planning Board as he will be leaving at the end of the month.

Terry noted that there are more than 250 volunteer positions in the Town of Acton.

Next Meeting: July 14, 2017, 7:30 AM, Acton Town Hall – Room 9