



OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

June 2, 2023

7:30 am

VIRTUAL

Present: Karen O'Neill (chairing meeting), Andy Magee, Terry Maitland, Michaela Moran, Alissa Nicol, Matthew Mostoller, David Marshall, Paulina Knibbe, Brandon Comstock, Jane Moosbrucker

Absent: None.

Non-Committee Members Present: Susan Mitchell-Hardt, President Acton Conservation Trust; Joe Cooney and Jody Harris, Board Members, Acton Conservation Trust; Alexandra Wahlstrom, Acton Water District; Meredith Houghton and Samantha Corbin, Sudbury Valley Trustees; Joe Will, Town Resident; Bettina Abe and Mike Gendron, Town of Acton Conservation Division Staff.

I. Opening

Mr. Maitland opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m.

II. Minutes

- A. The 2023-05-05 draft minutes were accepted unanimously by roll call vote.

III. Regular Business

- A. Town meeting recap: The \$775,000 open space set aside allocation passed. The Conant property CR at 549 Main Street purchase also passed.
- B. Wetherbee/ Moritz Family Parcel \$775,000 (38.1 acres) – Mike Gendron reported that he, Terry Maitland, Jody Harris, and Bettina Abe met with Attorney Ray Lyons for a site walk on the Moritz land. Ray continued to reiterate the family wants the land protected in perpetuity. It's a spectacular parcel with vernal pools and diverse forest. Ray wanted the first site walk to be with a very small group. The next site walk will include everyone, will be scheduled well in advance, and all committee members will be notified. David Martin states the Select Board is very interested in acquiring the parcel, but with some trepidation associated with cost. Karen says Ray Lyons expressed a desire to move it along and was hoping for a fall town meeting, or at least that it happens within a year. Mike states that Ray thinks if we push for getting things ready for fall town meeting, then maybe by next year's spring town meeting a warrant article will definitely be ready. Payment over time may be an option, Karen states. Paulina offers possibility to seek a



grant. Meredith stated that there are grants at the state level and perhaps private foundation money as well. It will depend on magnitude. Meredith says start with larger site walk then figure out what to pursue. David Martin says family would be willing to loan the money like a mortgage and be paid back over time; but don't count on a fall town meeting as it costs 5 figures. Select Board has not approved one in several years. Fall TM's occur generally if there are multiple reasons. Brandon states he has a background in capital raising and grant writing and offers to assist, as does Paulina.

- C. Triangle Farm – Susan reports the property is still for sale. Been on market 45-50 days. There re 3 parcels, one key for 29 acres for \$2.5 million and two 10-acre parcels, list for \$1,750,000. David Martin stated it's difficult for the town to deal with more than one big purchase at the time, so which one would this committee would recommend to the select board? Susan states we lost and gained vital projects by not doing both at once. No guaranteed success with either; the example being the Palmer Land; and with respect to Morrison Farm and Camp Acton which came up at same time. Fortunately, a resident passionate about Camp Acton at the time put it on a citizen's petition and they got Camp Acton for short change; and we got Morrison at same time.

If we want to go forward with multiple parcels, we have to put in the work. A CR on Morrison would cost the town nothing. Generally, Susan feels ranking should be Wetherbee/Moritz land first and Triangle Farm second, because with one you are working with a family intent on preservation; and the other owner wants to maximize profit. Both are important on the maps, and we can see how key they are.

Joe Cooney observes: in the last set of Select Board goals open space was not called out. Current goal setting is going on now-- so very important for Open Space Committee members to weigh in with Select Board because open space is a priority for town residents. Andy asks the Committee is willing to submit a letter to Select Board. David states priority is helpful to know, but definitely a letter is helpful. Where do we put our limited resources? This does not mean the committee can't be working on two parcels, but for those working on logistics, it's important to know priority. Karen volunteers to write that letter.

- D. Morrison Farm CR update: The Historic District Commission and Acton Historic Commission have been discussing ways to preserve the farmhouse and barn by creating a historic district along one side of Concord Road, between Route 2A/Great Road, and the Woodlawn Cemetery Stone Chapel. Mike, Bettina, and Susan met with Morene Bodner and Pete Westover recently to discuss next steps. ACT will cover all costs associated with legal defense insurance, baseline documentation, and up to \$20,000 of similar expenses, with the expectation that it will not cost the town anything. That's how deeply ACT feels about preserving Morrison Farm.



IV. New special business.

- a. Open Space and Recreation Plan - Mike reports they are plugging along and making progress, working through parcel prioritization list. Bettina and Mike are working on accomplished goals and determining which ones the Town wants to hold strong to. Mike has identified different liaison groups/committees that pair well with each goal and objective. Mike would like next agenda to have goals and tasks discussed by this committee in July.
- b. Assistant Planners are working on the OSRP and updates will go public with it along with a call for photos of open space and conservation areas, including wildlife and scenic views. One of those photos will be used as the OSRP cover photo. The rest will be included throughout the plan.
- c. Agriculture: a trail was built by Jody Harris of ACT on Stonefield farm property in early May with student and adult volunteers. A sign is being made. This trail satisfies the Fields Pond Foundation grant requirement.
- d. Andy has set up an agenda and minutes template going forward.
- e. Terry and Karen will share as co-chairs for a while until Karen takes over. Committees need to vote on officers. David says there is another committee with co-chairs, so that is fine.
- f. Andy Magee moves that Karen O'Neill and Terry Maitland become co-chairs on July 1, 2023. The motion was seconded. Roll call vote was unanimously in favor.
- g. Andy says the Community Preservation Committee writes the plan in September, and accepts application in November. An application needs to be submitted from the Open Space Committee for the set aside funds. Andy also has templates for presentations he can share. Mike G. points out with transition of chair to feel free to rely on staff as much as needed. That's what we're here for.
- h. Anderson land CR and Piper Lane CR update - Susan met with SVT Kristin O'Brien and Meredith Houghton. They will follow up on Christa Collins' work. We thank them for their intended follow up. We should remember to follow up on a monthly basis so we don't let them languish. Log jam has broken! Anderson land kiosks will be built this summer by two Eagle Scouts. James Hryniewicz, the contractor building the homes on Genevieve Lane, has completed building his donated boardwalk across Grassy Pond Brook on the CR land. Susan says the CR reviewer at State expects to get to her review of it soon.
- i. We have met historically at 7:30 Friday mornings. **Next meeting is July 14, 2023 at 7:30 AM.** Who can continue meeting at this time, date, virtually? Paulina would like to meet in person if possible. Jane does not prefer 7:30 AM. Mike says LSC and AGCom meet hybridly and ConsCom will meet hybridly soon. The members decided to meet **hybridly for July and August on Fridays at 7:30 AM in Room 9.**

- V. The Conant Land CR will be co-held by SVT and the Acton Conservation Commission (ConsCom). There will be an MOU between SVT and ConsCom.



- VI. **Thank you, ANDY for all of your hard work and commitment over these years preserving hundreds of acres and leading this committee!** Karen has a map of all the important bird areas across the continent as a gift! David Martin named Andy as Faulkner Exemplary Volunteer of the Year!
- VII. Motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Next meeting is July 14, 2023 at 7:30 AM, hybrid Zoom and in Room 9 Acton Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by Bettina Dabney Abe