



**TOWN OF ACTON
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE**

Meeting Minutes

August 8th, 2023

7:30 am VIRTUAL and In Person

Acton Town Hall Room 9, 472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720

Committee Members Present: Karen O'Neill (chairing meeting), Terry Maitland (co-chair), Michaela Moran (Planning Board Liaison). Brandon Comstock, Paulina Knibbe; Jane Moosbrucker

Committee Members Absent: David Marshall, Matt Mostoller (AWD)

Non-Committee Members present: David Martin (Select Board liaison), Alexandra Wahlstrom (AWD), Joe Will, A call-in listener, Jody Harris (ACT), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (ACT), Ann Budner of 9 Horseshoe Drive, and Mary Ann Grant of 127 Concord Road ("the dam house"), Maria Giacino.

- I. Meeting is opened by Karen O'Neill (Chairperson) at 7:34 am.
- II. Karen read the COVID-19 Guidance on hybrid attendance options.
- III. Minutes tabled due to technical difficulties – Accepted unanimously at 8:27 am.
- IV. Welcomed Ian Bergemann, new Land Stewardship Coordinator.
- V. Wetherbee – a walk occurred with 2 Select Board members and attorney Ray Lyons for the property. Next step is an appraisal from the town. David Martin asked how do we go forward? He answered that he would speak to the Select Board Chair to see if they are interested in moving it forward at this time. David Martin action item: talk to Jim. Jane asked if the committee has any funding to do the appraisal. Karen explained there is funding in the CPC. But the appraisal needs to come from the Select Board. David explained the contract for the appraisal comes from the town; the committee does not have the authority to make a contract with anybody on behalf of the Town. Jane asked if the Open Space Committee (OSC) could do the research to find the contractor and then the town could just approve it? David said that has never been done that way. The town manager would choose the appraisal company. Karen said that this is top of the list of priorities and hopes the Select Board feels the same way: persevering this property is of high priority. Karen noted that the Select Board has concern about the price. Mike asked if it would be appropriate for the OSC to write a letter to the Select Board about this being a top priority. David said we could go ahead informally and to assure ourselves that funding is available. He mentioned there was some analysis with Bill Dickenson, chair of the Acton Historic Commission. We would need to assure the funding is available perhaps using the appraisal from the property owner and compare that with the Town's appraisal. David mentioned it is up to this committee to look for funding options as it would be difficult to ask the Select board to fund the purchase entirely. David mentioned it would be helpful for the OSC to present a proposed funding scheme i.e bonding, fundraising. It is up to the Select board to negotiate with the seller. Jane asked what the involvement of this committee? David explained that this committee does a lot of work to acquire land through proposing how/what funding options are available, such as informal discussions with property owners working in collaboration with ACT and this committee. The OSC has the ability to frame the acquisition of properties. Susan mentioned that Andy Magee negotiated with landowners and brought the result to the Select board for discussion. She explained that often the purchasing of land is not aligned with the timeline of CPA applications. Susan asked if would be appropriate to show the Select board's desire to acquire this property along the lines of less than a million with a bonding package for a CPA. David explained that in the case of Stonefield Farm example, Andy negotiated the price in the Executive Session, which involved working a strategy. David said it makes sense to prepare what you would seek from the CPC

funding and strategies for how that money would be broken down. In the end, the Select board and Town Council would work with the seller to agree on a price, and then bring it to Town Meeting. The item may be in two places in the warrant, i.e. town funding and CPC funding. Brandon asked if there is a current number for Wetherbee? Karen mentioned there is a number, but it is undisclosed. The seller has an appraisal. Karen asked who would be willing to work to put together a framework for funding options. Susan mentioned she reached out to Bill Dickenson, who had originally created a financial model, but has declined to present it to the OSC. Dean Charter directed Susan to talk to Steve Trimble, chair of the CPC. This may include 2 lands next to each other (Conant Land). Paulina said she would lead the creation of the funding model. David said starting with Steve Trimble on the CPC makes sense. Susan asked if Anne and Marianne could introduce themselves as neighborhood advocates. Marianne Grant lives at 127 Concord Rd and they abut Wetherbee. Anne Budner, who lives in the Dam House 9 Horseshoe Drive and abuts Wetherbee. They expressed other neighbors who abut the property and are interested in seeing this property acquired. Susan stated that Attorney Ray Lyons asked her if she could do research on the yes/no historical value on the 12 -14 radio towers in Wetherbee woods. Would it be possible to request Historical Preservation Funds for the CPA. She spoke with Bob Ferrara, who had her put on the citizens concern for Aug 9th Historical Commission. The chair, Bill Dickenson, may have some information. Bill Klauer may have some insight as well. The structures were seen more as a liability than as anything of historic value. The Historic Commission could reach out to their partners for more information on them. Susan has a photograph of the towers. August 9th Room 126 Historic Commission meets. Susan googled radio antennas in Acton and found some old papers that say they were used for Cold War era detection of Russian submarines off the coast of the U.S Eastern seaboard.

- VI. Clerk position - Karen asked if anyone would like to be the Clerk? Someone on the committee who would take the meeting minutes. Brandon asked if the meetings are record. He mentioned that we could use AI to automate the transcription process and create a searchable repository. Karen asked if we can table it as something to think about and the legality of using it – Mike would look into it. Brandon offered to do a presentation at a future meeting. Brandon explained it would be a password protected repository. Paulina explained that Open Meeting Law would still require meeting minutes being reviewed and voted on. She said this would allow us to review our meetings more extensively. Brandon mentioned that it would not replace the minutes but be a tool for the minutetaker/clerk. Mike asked for a cost and Brandon said he uses a free program: Dovetail. David mentioned that whatever we store has to adhere to Public Record Laws. Mike mentioned he could have access to it.
- VII. Morrison Status: no new updates
- VIII. Piper Ln CR: Been submitted to the state
- IX. No updates on Triangle Farm property. Status quo.
- X. 549 Main Street update: Mike said the CR is in process but the baseline documentation report generated by SVT has been sent around for review. The recent comments have been submitted to the Water District to finalize the CR.
- XI. OSRP – Mike: sent an email with subgoals for the OSRP. Explained the Goals, subgoals, tasks. Karen said next meeting in September we would have comments for Mike. Mike explained the 5 identified current subgoals:
 1. Ensure permanent protection status of all conservation parcels
 2. Create more expansive wildlife corridors
 3. Maintain communication with key landowners
 4. Preserve and protect forested and trees
 5. Protect existing open fields, meadows, and Ag parcels

Karen suggested wetland/rivers corridors or aquatic/riparian. Asked if this could be resent and if the subject could be please review for OSC September meeting. Mike will have an agenda item to review and brainstorm for September

- XII. Karen asked if any other comments or items to be on the agenda for the September meeting. Susan did comment the Acton Climate Action plan didn't list any nature-based solutions on the plan. Susan looked at the Climate Action plan again and they were added afterwards. Paulina asked if we meeting once a month or every two weeks, and Karen said normally once a month unless we need to meet twice a month.
- XIII. The next meeting is September 4th and will also be hybrid. Jane asked if we could meet at a different time. It was precedent that OSC meets at 7:30 am.

Notes: Jane Moosbrucker needs to have a government email. She should contact the Clerk office.

Meeting moved to close. Majority voted.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ian Bergemann, Land Stewardship Coordinator, Town of Acton