



Open Space Planning Committee

Minutes
September 13, 2007

Meeting convened at 11:05 am. Present: Anne Anable, Joe Cavanaugh, Ed Germain, Betsey Harris, Henry James, Jack Lewis, Sue Yarger. Absent: Bruce Simpson, Mike Walker.

Ed convened the meeting by sketching the work that had been done by the Ad Hoc Open Space Committee of previous years. Jack passed out the “Open Space Committee Recommended Priorities,” thoughts provided by the Conservation Commission, influenced by the Ad Hoc committee’s work, and a “Dublin Open Space Plan – Draft Outline” that cogently sketches the background, purpose, goals, action areas, methods of protecting and financing open space, and comments on priorities. Ed said that reading these documents was homework for the next meeting.

Discussion continued. The Ad Hoc committee prepared a rough map of areas in Dublin that it believed should be protected. The map is stored in the documents closet on the main floor. All agreed that at its next meeting, the map should be present, and members should consolidate the decisions and recommendations of the former committee, approve a statement of purpose, set of criteria, and action areas.

Joe introduced the issue of adjacent towns, some of whom already have active open space committees. Ed pointed out that Harrisville was interested in talking to Dublin about related open space corridors, and so was Peterborough. Jack pointed to the value of grounding and consolidating Dublin’s open space thinking before asking other towns for theirs. There was some disagreement on this issue, but it was resolved agreeing that a public hearing in Dublin was important at an early date. Betsey said “in October,” noting that there was a need to move swiftly.

At the public meeting, the basic ideas behind this committee’s purpose and mission would be put forward. No reference would be made to specific lots, but to the concept of Open Space Planning. Attendees would be asked for reactions, ideas, suggestions.

Ed pointed out that one of the signs of a town under heavy growth pressure was when land prices begin to rise proportionately more than house prices. He compared it to a supply and demand situation: developers and buyers begin to realize that there are few good parcels left, and due to the perceived shortage of supply, and the increasing demand, the prices on undeveloped land begins to rise. "This," he said, "is what is happening in Dublin right now, based on the town's assessor's data."

Sue and Jack and Annie and Betsey made references to other towns that had succumbed to development pressures partly because they had no open space plan. Betsey cited Milford which has paid "a fortune" for a relatively small parcel, in order to protect it. She pointed out that there is a point where a town cannot afford to protect a parcel: if "backland costs \$1,000 an acre, a town can afford to protect it. If it costs \$50,000 an acre, it can't." Betsey stressed the importance of this committee's work.

A general consensus arose that the committee should 1) consolidate the work of the Ad Hoc committee, and 2) move quickly toward a public meeting on Open Space Planning.

At this point Ed nominated Betsey for Chair, seconded by Jack, approved by unanimous vote. Betsey accepted, on the condition that none of us tell her husband. Ed volunteered to be secretary unless someone else would prefer to do it. He was nominated and unanimously approved.

Betsey focused on the resources each member could bring to this working committee. She said while she knew most of the members' skills, she'd like to hear from others. Sue reported that her computer skills were good; Henry said he was also very familiar with computers, and also that he had a friend who was a pilot and who might be instrumental in taking aerial photographs of sections of the town

Betsey stressed the importance of maps. Ed noted that actual, accurate mapping via overflight was a complex and potentially expensive procedure. Anne, Betsey and Jack spoke about the advantage of aerial photographs of a specific area. It gives a perspective to the public that figures or PowerPoint presentations can't. Betsey referred to the aerial photograph of Harrisville used at the recent meeting of the Monadnock Conservancy. Considerable discussion followed about maps, mapping, layers, and cost.

Betsey sketched the composition of the Monadnock Conservancy committee just formed to assist towns in planning. She said she did not yet know about the application procedures for towns that wish to take advantage of this service.

Here and previously in the discussion, Joe emphasized the necessity of evaluating the work of the Ad Hoc committee, consolidating it along with the material submitted by Jack, and involving the public in discussion. He stressed the need to focus on immediate goals. Some talk arose about a bond, akin to the million dollar bond that Marlborough has for conservation land. All

appeared to agree that if the time should come that such a Warrant Article was presented to the town, the support of this committee would be essential; moreover, the securing of such a bond would not be, at least at this time, a prime goal of this committee. Instead, its immediate goal would be to produce an Open Space Plan or set of Open Space Procedures, after considerable public input, and careful evaluation and research by the committee. Several members stressed that there are many ways to protect property. Joe had referred to several properties that the town owns, and reiterated that an Open Space Plan could recommend appropriate uses of these parcels.

The group tentatively set Thursday, September 27, at 10:00 a.m. as its next meeting date. At 12:22 p.m. it adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

APPROVED

Ed Germain
Secretary