



Open Space Planning Committee

Minutes - April 5, 2008

Meeting convened at the Library at 9:30A.M. Members present: Sterling Abram, Ed Germain, Henry James, Betsey Harris, Jack Lewis, Bruce Simpson, Sue Yarger. Absent: Joe Cavanaugh, Bill Barker, Mike Walker.

Also present: 32 citizens of the Town of Dublin.

Betsey welcomed the gathering and outlined the process of the Open Space Planning Committee's founding and work. The Selectmen appointed an ad hoc Open Space Committee in 2005 and in 2007 replaced it with the permanent Open Space Planning Committee. The committee's first charge was to come up with an Open Space Plan for Dublin. The draft of this plan was distributed to all present.

Betsey explained that the Open Space Plan is in no way a zoning ordinance, but a document that helped willing landowners help the town protect as open space specific areas of town. She emphasized that Dublin residents have been active in land preservation for over a century. Appendix 1 in the Open Space Plan sketches some of these remarkable efforts.

She stressed that Dublin is fortunate in still having a number of large parcels of land, and then explained every Master Plan and every town survey has called for further protection of open space. Betsey said the committee had analyzed the resources that should be protected:

Water Supply / Aquifer

Surface Waters
Wetlands
Wildlife Habitat; Biodiversity
Productive Soils (forestry; agriculture)
Recreation
Unfragmented Tracts
Connections and Buffers
Existing or Potential Trails
Scenic Assets, Viewsheds, Ridgelines, Important Landscape Features

As a result areas in town have been identified as priority areas, areas where a number of these resources are located and should be protected for the benefit of the town. She emphasized that not all land in any area needed to be protected, and that some land outside the designated areas should be protected. The purpose in identifying the seven priority areas is to focus attention on natural and cultural resources to help the committee and the town decide if open space protection is desirable.

She emphasized that the Open Space Plan was a guide for the town and its committees to work with willing landowners for the benefit of both.

She pointed to a map that highlighted the 7 Priority Areas that the committee had identified. Members of the committee summarized the resources particular to each area. These are contained in the Open Space Plan, attached.

Questions from the citizens were numerous, especially on the way land could be protected. Committee members took turns summarizing the various techniques, all explained in the Open Space Plan. Members emphasized that while outright gifts are wonderful and welcome, there are ways to realize substantial economic benefits from protecting land. No one, Betsey said, *must* do anything, but there are new methods, such as selling development rights, that allow land owners to keep the land and realize substantial income tax relief. The Board noted, however, that this tax relief will need to be renewed by Congress after 2009. Development rights can also be purchased outright to accomplish the same goals. This is only one of the several methods of preserving important natural resources. Others are explained in the Open Space Plan.

Who would hold the conservation easement? The holder could be the Town via the Dublin Conservation Commission, or an agency such as the Society

for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests or the Monadnock Conservancy. The Committee stressed that its job was to make these options available to willing landowners.

The meeting ended in applause at 10:25.

APPROVED

Ed Germain
Secretary