



OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
Minutes of September 4, 2020 Meeting
VIRTUAL MEETING
7:30 AM

Note: The Town of Acton in response to the COVID-19 (Corona Virus) is currently following the guidance from the Acton Board of Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the CDC regarding the virus and steps communities can take to prevent the spread. The Town Hall is closed to the public.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
<https://zoom.us/j/92847015079>

Committee Members in attendance: Andy Magee, Terry Maitland, Matt Mostoller, Will Hill, Dave Martin, Dave Marshall, Ray Yacoubey

Absent: Dick Hatfield

Natural Resources Director: Tom Tidman

Visitors: Susan Mitchel-Hardt, Karen Martin, Joe Will

I. Regular Business

Review meeting minutes of Friday, March 6, 2020 and Thursday, July 2, 2020.

1. Terry moved to accept the minutes of March 6, 2020, Will seconded the motion and the roll call vote was unanimous.
2. Terry moved to accept the minutes of July 2, 2020. Will seconded the motion and the roll call vote was unanimous.

II. New/Special Business

1. Special Town Meeting, September 8, 2020. Vote on the proposal to acquire the 4 Piper Lane, 6 Piper Lane and 4 Piper Lane Rear parcels and a 40-foot-wide Right of Way on the eastern side of the 90 School Street parcel from Piper Lane LLC. Andy will not be able to attend the meeting. Dave Martin said he would attend. Funding is proposed to come from the CPA open-space set-aside funds in the form of 50% bonding and 50% direct withdrawal. ACT (Acton Conservation Trust) is raising funds to offset some of the Town's cost to purchase. The goal is to raise \$60K. \$47,255 has been raised to date
2. Review of Comment Letter to Community Preservation Committee (CPC) on the draft Town of Acton 2021 Community Preservation Act Plan. Andy's presented his letter to the CPC suggesting edits to the draft Plan that emphasize Town people's support for open space protection and to (presumably) reflect the anticipated Town Meeting vote authorizing the Piper Lane purchase with CPA open space set-aside funds. (Draft letter attached.)
3. Update on Stonefield Farm. Review of grant support letter for Boston Area Gleaners. This organization has about 70 farms participating in collecting excess food for local area food banks. They're looking for a place to headquartered. An appraisal has been completed. Cost will be around \$1.5M, and the owners are interested in pursuing. Andy has submitted a letter of support on behalf of the OSC. (attached)
4. 53 River Street: no report

5. Triangle Farm: Susan has made contact with the owners and a site walk is being planned.
6. Hebert Farm: no report
7. Wetherbee Street: no report
8. Presentation by Karen Martin, Vice Chair of the Dog Park Committee

Karen described the process the committee has gone through in selecting and vetting 14 potential sites of the park. These include Morrison Farm, Quarry Road, School St/Great Hill, and the Kennedy site (Main Street). The OSC leans heavily in support of the Main Street site and strongly against the Morrison site.

III. Consent Items: None

IV. Executive Session: None

V. Next Meeting: October 2, 7:30 AM

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 AM

The listed agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair. Not all items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Include a description of the accommodation you will need, including as much detail as you can and include a way we can contact you if we need more information. Please allow advance notice. Send an e-mail to manager@actonma.gov or call Town Manager's Office (978)929-6611

For more information about the Open Space Committee contact Tom Tidman at
ttidman@acton-ma.gov or (978) 929-6634.



TOWN OF ACTON

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Open Space Committee

September XX, 2020

Mr. Ray Yacouby, Chair
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee
c/o Planning Department
Acton Town Hall
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

**RE: Community Preservation Plan Project Application:
Open Space Acquisition/Protection Set-Aside Funds**

Dear Chairman Yacouby and Community Preservation Committee Members:

The Town of Acton Open Space Committee (“the OSC”) thanks the Community Preservation Committee (the “CPC”) for the opportunity to review the *Draft Town of Acton Community Preservation Plan 2021* (the “Draft Plan”). As always, the document is both thorough and helpful in its presentation of the Community Preservation Act (the “CPA”) and its administrative process.

The OSC would respectfully suggest two edits to the Draft Plan as currently presented. These entail an expansion of the introductory paragraph to the “Open Space and Recreation” section of the Draft Plan (Page 10), and the addition of references to the recent votes by the CPC and Town Meeting to expend up to \$1.15 million dollars of the Open Space set-aside funds on the purchase of the “Piper Lane” parcels in South Acton.

“Open Space and Recreation” section introductory paragraph.

The introduction to the Open Space and Recreation section of the Draft Plan correctly references the strong citizen interest in open space protection as reflected in the *2014-2021 Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan* (the OSRP). However, the OSC would note that such interest is also strongly reflected in the *Acton 2020 Community Plan* and the earlier *1998 Town of Acton Master Plan Update*.

The OSC would suggest the introductory paragraph to the “Open Space and Recreation” section of the Draft Plan recognize all of these affirmations, including the unanimous, or nearly unanimous, votes of approval for every CPA land protection purchase brought to Town Meeting by the CPC. The OSC would respectfully suggest that the current introductory paragraph be replaced with a narrative such as that suggested below:

The *Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2014 - 2021* identifies three specific goals relating to the protection of the Town’s open space: the preservation of the remaining elements of Acton’s rural character, environmental protection, and improved recreational opportunities. These goals specifically reference the protection of existing open fields and meadows, the preservation of forests, and the support of local farms and farming.

The *Acton 2020 Community Plan* approved at the 2012 April Town Meeting also identifies the preservation of open space as a major goal of Town planning efforts. Specifically, the Plan states that a key goal is to

"protect, acquire, and improve open space for conservation, farming, and recreation." The Plan goes on to state *"that these efforts will be supplemented by continuing to purchase open space with CPA Funds."*

Similarly, the 1998 *Town of Acton Master Plan Update* specifically includes reference to the protection of Acton's remaining farmland, the conservation of open space parcels, the creation of green belts, and the management and enhancement of Acton's existing conservation lands.

All of these documents, and the actions the residents of Acton, continue to affirm the importance of the protection of open space and adequate passive and active recreational areas as critical to preserving the character of the Town and thereby the quality of life shared by its citizens.

Piper Lane Purchase.

On June 26, 2020 the Town of Acton Select Board voted to purchase the Piper Lane parcels in South Acton for \$1.15 million, contingent upon approval of the CPC and Town Meeting to do so utilizing CPA Open Space set-aside funds. Approval of said request was granted by the CPC on July 2, 2020, and subsequently by Town Meeting on September 8, 2020.

The final approval of this purchase was issued prior to the issuance of the Draft Plan. The OSC would respectfully request that this use of the Open Space set-aside be reflected in the final version of the *Town of Acton Community Preservation Plan 2021*.

Thank you very much for your consideration of the above material

Respectfully yours,

Andrew D. Magee

Andrew D. Magee
Chair, Town of Acton Open Space Committee

cc. J.Mangiaratti, Town Manager
M.Selby, Director of Land Use and Economic Development
T.Tidman, Natural Resources Director



TOWN OF ACTON

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Open Space Committee

DRAFT September 4, 2020

Kathleen Theoharides
Secretary of Energy and Environment
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Boston Area Gleaners FY21 Food Insecurity Grant Program Application

Dear Ms. Theoharides,

The Town of Acton Open Space Committee is extremely pleased to submit this letter in support of the Boston Area Gleaners FY21 Food Insecurity Grant Program grant application for the purchase of the Stonefield Farm in Acton, Massachusetts.

The Town of Acton Open Space Committee was created in 2005 as an advisory committee to the Board of Selectmen and other Town boards on the acquisition and/or protection of open space, including local farmlands. To this end, the Open Space Committee has worked with the owners/farmers of Stonefield Farm for many years in an attempt to identify a potential buyer that would meet both the owner's and the Town's vision of seeing this land remain as productive, sustainable farmland. The Committee cannot imagine a more ideal candidate than that represented by the Boston Area Gleaners – one dedicated not only to seeing the farm remain in agricultural use, but to also working to increase access “to fresh, local healthy produce for low income families.”

The preservation of Stonefield Farm is highly consistent with the *Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan* and *The Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2014 – 2020*. The *Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan* approved at the 2012 April Town Meeting specifically states that a key goal of the Plan is to “protect, acquire, and improve open space for conservation, farming, and recreation.” Similarly, the *Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2014 - 2021* specifically references the protection of existing open fields and meadows, the preservation of forests, and the support of local farms and farming. More recently, the 2019 Acton Town Meeting voted to establish an Agricultural Commission and a Right to Farm Bylaw. The Committee would note that Stonefield Farm abuts farmland previously protected by the Town through a Community Preservation Act fund purchase and the subsequent implementation of a Conservation Restriction specifically designed to preserve the parcel as farmland and which is currently leased to the farmers of Stonefield Farm.

The Open Space Committee looks forward to working with the Boston Area Gleaners in ensuring that Stonefield Farm remains a productive and important component of the agricultural community of Acton and eastern Massachusetts. The successful acquisition of a Food Insecurity Grant would greatly aid in advancing this vision, including providing leverage in obtaining Community Preservation Act funding.

The Open Space Committee wishes to thank the Secretary for consideration of the Boston Area Gleaners proposal and stands ready to assist in making this project a success.

Sincerely,



Andrew Magee
Chair, Town of Acton Open Space Committee