



OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
January 14, 2022
7:30 am
VIRTUAL

Present: Andy Magee, Dick Hatfield, Terry Maitland, Alissa Nicol, Matt Mostoller, Ray Yacoub

Absent: David Marshall.

Non-Committee Members Present: Bettina Abe, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Christa Collins, Joe Will, Alexandra Wahlstrom, David Martin, Tom Tidman, Michaela Moran.

1. Opening

Chair Andy Magee opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m.

2. Regular Business

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes from the October 8, 2021 meeting were reviewed and approved by a vote of 6 ayes and 1 abstention.

3. New/Special Business

- A. Brief Review as Necessary. Presentation to Community Preservation Committee will be on February 22. Triangle Farm – last meeting with landowner 10/14. Cannot move forward with appraisal at this time. Nothing new to report on property transaction Hebert Farm. Wetherbee – no news. Kennedy – no report. Dog park project has an architect.
- B. Discussion – CPA Funds. Andy suggested there is a problem in that CPA funding is no longer keeping up with pace of real estate costs. There are several multiple million dollar+ potential projects before the Committee. Setting aside \$500k here and there will not get us anywhere without grants. We currently have a couple of high priority, but expensive, parcels in front of us. Should we spend it all and bond out \$400k per year for 10 years, tie up all potential CPA funds for 10-15 years and shut down operations and say we are done? As it stands, we must either turn away key projects like Wetherbee Street or spending all future funds now.

Ray noted the CPC is under a lot of stress with requests. We can also go to Town Meeting outside of CPA - does not have to be just CPA money. Andy says this is going past that; the Town did step in on River Street and Piper Lane, but there is a limit to how often the Town budget will allow such expenditures. We could get more aggressive with grant writing.



Ray discussion is funding in general – how to address the current limitations and deciding what to do with them or finding additional funding sources. The Committee needs to have a hard discussion of priorities and clearly communicate that with the Select Board.

Alissa suggested there is a different way to purchase. Concord uses the approach of not keeping a huge pot to purchase, but instead bonding all purchases. Alissa suggested that the FinCom seem to say they like that approach. Andy noted that would be a sea change at the FinCom as early on there was opposition to CPA bonding, particularly from the more conservative elements. Andy also noted that we are already bonded out at approximately \$150K per year on land projects (Wright Hill and Piper Lane). We have two several million-dollar projects for which bonding might be a solution. What we are looking at now will tie up about \$450k for next 10 years. We might not have bonding capability going forward if we buy these parcels now.

Ray says we are not asking to bond every year. But we are still doing the set aside annually. This is not a panacea - just need to get people to consider the dilemma. One solution would be increasing CPA percentage to 3%. Not an easy sell. CPA Committee analyzed that five years ago and recommended increasing the surcharge to 3%. The Select Board at the time decided not to carry it forward. We should discuss it now again in relation to how effective the CPA is. The CPA only passed narrowly the first time.

David Martin says the Select Board will be discussing this issue and we should watch agendas to comment. David noted there are second and third rounds of dollar distributions for communities who have full 3%. Ray suggested resurrecting the old report.

Matt suggested more discussion around priority parcels. We should vet projects before coming to reality rather than being reactionary and we should be more proactive for funding sources. We should look at prioritization list in OSRP. Ray suggested we are not reactionary; we only can respond to ones that come before us.

Alissa – zoning is also a tool we could use differently. Not a fan of PCRC, because what is protects is already generally protected as to wetlands etc. Ray suggested being very careful about zoning in the current environment. The State says towns are using zoning in discriminatory manner, and often abuse zoning.

- C. Matt introduced the group to Alexandra Wahlstrom who works for water district. Alexandra will transition into Matt's role.

4. Executive Session

Chair Andy Magee announced that the Open Space Committee would be entering executive session for the purpose of considering the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property at 549 Main Street, Acton, under purpose 6, as an open meeting may



have a detrimental effect of the negotiating position of the public body. The Chair further announced that the Open Space Committee would reconvene in open session following the conclusion of executive session, solely for the purpose of adjourning the meeting. Terry moved that the Committee go into executive session and include Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Christa Collins and Alexandra Walstrom. Ray seconded the motion, and the roll call vote was unanimous.

The Executive Session ended at 8:30 and the meeting adjourned.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Meeting minutes of October 8, 2021

Voted in the Affirmative October 14, 2022