

January 10, 2008

Open Space Committee

Present: Chairperson Susan Payne, Charles LaMunier, Joann Caldara, Chick Treadway, Phil Dutton

Guests: Wayne Hileman, John Boyer

Susan Payne Chairperson called the meeting to order at 4:40pm.

Minutes: In looking over the minutes Charles LaMunier amended the motion to read: *There was discussion of the Housing Commission, Washington Housing Trust and Open Space Committee having conversation, on how to align goals and work together. This needs to be followed up on.*

Motion: Joann Caldara made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 8, 2007 meeting of the Open Space Committee as amended, Susan Payne seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Susan Payne introduced Wayne Hileman, Chairman of the Housing Commission whom she invited to the Open Space Committee meeting to give an update and thoughts on possible future pooling of resources. Wayne Hileman began by informing members that the Housing Commission oversees the affordable housing fund which presently has \$175,000.00. Mr. Hileman described the Housing Commission as a more passive commission and went on to say that someone petitions the commission for funds, the Housing Commission does not use the funds. The Affordable Housing Fund was set up separate from the Open Space Fund, the Housing Commission accepts a request which then goes on to the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and finally to a Town Meeting. Charles LaMunier suggested pooling funds from the Open Space Committee, Housing Commission and Washington Housing Trust. Chick Treadway asked Wayne if the Housing Commission was actively looking for affordable housing parcels. Wayne answered that the Housing Commission doesn't implement or build they are a research and development vehicle, a more passive role which steers people toward other resources. He went on to say that they are not an Affordable Housing Commission, they study all housing needs and spoke about the Affordable Housing Appeals Act and the point system for designated affordable housing units.

John Boyer arrived at 4:55pm.

Members went on to discuss a limited equity parcel program, which purchases a parcel of land that is then offered for building. This takes the high land price out of the equation; the parcel is leased to a person who acquires a mortgage to build a home on the land. Wayne Hileman spoke about the success the Town of Litchfield has had with this program they have done eighteen homes in the past twelve years. Looking at the town's planning and zoning regulation, they do a good job preserving farmland and forest but perhaps could be relaxed for single family housing development. Mr. Hileman understands the reluctance of the Zoning Commission to crack the door; he feels that ultimately it is all about the price of land. Mr. Boyer stated that under section 13 of the Zoning Regulations there is allowance for the Town of Washington or Non-Profit Sponsored Affordable Housing. He went on to suggest a price of \$200,000.00, a cottage about 1500sq. ft. with price to include well and septic. Susan Payne told Mr. Hileman and Mr. Boyer that the Open Space Commission was going to look at Town owned land and land on the market. Wayne Hileman noted that there is no incentive to donate land for housing. Susan Payne asked what the present strategy is for the Washington Housing Trust. Mr. Boyer stated that they have a waiting list for all three of their properties Dodge Farm, Riverwoods and Church Street, they are refocusing on single family homes, and they have limited equity.

Wayne Hileman and John Boyer left the meeting at 5:30pm.

Members briefly discussed land acquisition, cultivating the Open Space Fund and doing their homework in the mean time.

Susan Payne reported on open space preservation in the Town of Washington during 2007. Figures included approximately 218 acres added in 2007, bringing the total to 5818 acres of permanently preserved open space in Washington. This would be 23.5% toward the Town's goal of 30%. Ms. Payne also made note of 6 farm properties along the ridge on the New Milford/Washington town line, she felt that the Town of New Milford was paying attention to these properties and they could impact Washington.

In closing Ms. Payne circulated a check list from the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development and asked members to look it over to see what has been accomplished and what can be worked on, members will discuss at the February meeting.

Adjourned at 6:10pm.

Submitted subject to approval,

Pamela L. Osborne, Secretary