

January 19, 2005

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Present: Dan Sherr, Chairman, Susan Payne, Chick Treadway, Jack Field, Advisor

Guests: Dick Sears, First Selectman, Charles LaMunier

Dan Sherr Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:07pm.

MOTION: to accept the minutes of the December 15, 2005 meeting was made by Susan Payne, seconded by Chick Treadway and passed unanimously.

Straw Poll Results

Dan Sherr began by stating that he has been plagued with the question of whether the results were a true representation of the townspeople. Dan is encouraged because the response from parents with school aged children showed they are committed to preserving open space as well as the other respondents. Dan Sherr and Dick Sears presented the findings from the survey to the Board of Education. Chick Treadway asked why so few people responded to the survey, he was surprised that more townspeople didn't respond. Dan Sherr felt that the approximately 12% return was an excellent number, he was very happy with the range and response. Dan went on to say that while tallying the survey by hand you could tell that people took time with their responses. Dick Sears added that he felt the results were indicative of the townspeople. Jack Field agreed open space has become a high profile subject. Susan Payne added that with the decline in farming over the last 5-10 years people are concerned. Discussions lead to the topic of conveyance tax and the town's ability to pass an ordinance designating where these funds go. Mr. Sherr asked Mr. Sears what role the Open Space Committee could play to help. Mr. Sears hopes the Open Space Committee will be an advocate. Susan Payne added that the Conservation Commission has been discussing assembling local lawyers and real estate people and discussing pertinent land use issues. Chick Treadway commented that this would be beneficial to all.

Open Space & Housing - Open Space Committee March Recommendations to the Selectman

Dan Sherr feels the Housing Committee wants clarity of the relationship between the Housing and Open Space Committees; will the two committees be working together? It's Dan's view that the Open Space Committee will work with the Housing Committee on advocacy and locating parcels. The Open Space Committee would not be viewed as the owners of open space. Members present agreed with Dan, he will reassure the Housing Committee that the Open Space Committee would like to work together. At this point First Selectman Dick Sears questioned the future of the Open Space Committee. Dan Sherr referenced his "Proposed Action Plan" with roles defined as Advocate, Facilitator, Enabler and Manager. Dan went through and defined each role as represented on his had out. He feels that Advocate or Facilitator is a good role for the Open Space Committee. Chick Treadway asked what the Open Space Committee's role is with the Conservation Commission. Susan Payne felt the Open Space Committee would take on the responsibilities required by the State Statutes such as the open space inventory and the open space plan. The Conservation Commission has several other subcommittees such as greenways, land use brochure, invasive species, ridgeline preservation, cell towers etc. She feels that the Open Space Committee should remain under the Conservation Commission. Jack Field interjected that an Open Space Plan and criteria has been worked on and now need to be finalized. He went on to state that the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development has given general direction the Conservation Commission wants an action plan. The Open Space Plan has been adopted by the Planning Commission and the mechanical

step of creating the Open Space Fund has been done, unfortunately the Planning Commission never presented the Town Plan of Conservation and Development at a Town Meeting for approval so the Open Space Plan hasn't been approved by the Town either. The Open Space Plan needs to be implemented, need an action plan who, what and when? Susan Payne stated that the Conservation Commission will allow the Open Space Committee to act on its behalf and feels the next step is tax abatement for permanent preservation of open space. Jack Field noted that extending PA490 to open space with the condition that it's permanently preserved, you would be looking for land not already in PA490 that meets the criteria. A proposal needs to be made to the Board of Selectman by March 1st. The committee needs to come up with a specific plan including the financial aspect. The Open Space Plan has all the information, figures need to be updated. Chick Treadway noted that 15,000 acres are already preserved with easements. Jack Field added that not having tax abatement for Open Space encourages people to sell to developers. With farming on the decline land that is now under PA490 for farming will become available. Much discussion ensued with questions such as the need for the town to accept land, if it meets the criteria, if a private land trust doesn't want it, who applies the criteria, if land is denied there needs to be an appeal process, monitoring etc. Jack Field, Chick Treadway and Dan Sherr will get together to come up with a recommendation to the Selectmen by March 1st.

Town Newsletter

Dan Sherr will also draft information for the Town Newsletter whose deadline is January 24th.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55pm.

Next scheduled meeting of the Open Space Committee is February 16, 2005 at 5:00pm.

Submitted subject to approval,

Pamela L. Osborne, Secretary