

# March 16, 2005

## OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

**Present:** Patti Doran, Dan Sherr Chairman, Diane Williams, Charles LaMunier, Susan Payne, Chick Treadway

**Guest:** George Blake

Chairman, Dan Sherr called the meeting to order at 5:05pm.

**Review and discussion of the evaluation criteria to be used in ranking available OS parcels for permanent preservation.** George Blake joined the committee with a large map showing land parcels in the Town of Washington. The map contained the map-block-lot for each parcel. George Blake explained that other information could be overlaid on to the parcel map, such as the mapping information in the Natural Resource Inventory Report. Members viewed and discussed the Conceptual Future Land Use Map in the 2003 Town Plan of Conservation and Development. This map has a "Desirable Open Space" corridor overlay for the Town of Washington. Susan Payne reminded members that in being proactive by identifying desirable areas; you need to be sure the Town is willing to accept ownership/easements of parcels if other land preserve agencies do not want them. Charles LaMunier mentioned that the Inland Wetland Commission accepted a Conservation Easement as a trade off. The easement they accepted was located in an area which was probably of no interest to a land preservation agency. Charles asked if the Town was obligated to accept all land/small parcels? This brought up discussion on the Open Space Inventory Subcommittees work scoring parcels, 25 acres or bigger, criteria used and the need to keep updated. Members went on to discuss the Open Space Committees active involvement in creating an ordinance for tax relief for open space, becoming more precise about the goal of preserving 30% open space by 2015, having the "Open Space Plan" come alive and working on the open space inventory. Chick Treadway noted the importance of keeping George Blake's work up to date. Dan Sherr added that he expects to publish an annual progress report and keep the public and press informed.

**Review of the March 21 presentation to Selectman and the Board of Finance.** Dan Sherr circulated a handout outlining his presentation. One of the requests from the Open Space Committee is that the Selectman and Board of Finance consider reallocation of the real estate conveyance tax proceeds to the Open Space Acquisition Fund. Dan did some calculating and found that the following amount of conveyance tax were collected by the Town in the noted years 2002/2003 \$190,000 - 2003/2004 \$330,000 - 2004/February 2005 \$152, 429. The rationale is that the open space fund is an appropriate place for the conveyance tax because it comes from the sale of land. Additional requests to be made at the March 21st meeting are allocation of funds for the acquisitions of open space and establishment of an ordinance that provides tax relief to property owners who place permanent development restrictions on their property.

**MOTION: to authorize Dan Sherr, on behalf of the Open Space Committee, to request from the Board of Selectman and Board of Finance that they consider reallocation of the real estate conveyance tax proceeds to the Open Space Acquisition Fund was made by Susan Payne, seconded by Diane Williams and passed unanimously.**

**MOTION: to authorize Dan Sherr, on behalf of the Open Space Committee, to request from the Board of Selectman and Board of Finance the allocation of funds for the "fee simple" acquisition of Open Space as approved by the Town and to establish an ordinance that provides tax relief to property owners who place permanent development restrictions on their properties was made by**

**Susan Payne, seconded by Chick Treadway and passed unanimously.**

Chick Treadway and Dan Sherr have spoken with Barbara Johnson, Tax Assessor about tax relief for permanent protection of open space. The goal is to have land in 490 farm/forest become permanently protected open space. Ms. Johnson appeared to be onboard she felt this was doable. There was discussion of "rear acreage" which is assessed at 25% of its appraised value. Dan Sherr circulated a copy of State Statutes Sec. 7-131b. relating to "Acquisition of open space land and easement. Revaluation of property subject to easement". There is enabling legislation; we need to build on the town ordinance.

**MOTION: to accept the minutes of the February 16, 2005 meeting was made by Susan Payne, seconded by Patti Doran and passed unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.**

**Next scheduled meeting of the Open Space Committee is April 20, 2005 at 5:00pm.**

Submitted subject to approval,

Pamela L. Osborne, Secretary