

March 17, 2004

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Present: Susan Payne, Patti Doran, Elaine Luckey, Diane Williams, Darcy Wright, Phil Markert, Chick Treadway, Dimitri Rimsky, Betsy Corrigan

Guest: First Selectman Dick Sears, arrived at 5:40pm

Susan Payne called the meeting to order at 5:10pm.

Ms. Payne welcomed and introduced members of the newly formed "Open Space Committee", which was a recommendation from the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development. This committee was formed under the Conservation Commission. Dan Sherr, Phil Gorrivan and Diane Dupuis are also members of this Open Space Committee. Jack Field will be on board in an advisory capacity. Susan is looking for suggestions for a resident in the Marbledale area to serve on this committee.

Dimitri Rimsky voiced his concern about giving housing consideration; there is sensitivity in the community for the housing issue.

Susan Payne continued by stating that this committee was formed to get conversation flowing on the open space issue which was not done during the making of the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development. Open Space needs its own focus. The selectmen are also forming housing and municipal committees. This committee needs to come up with a plan for holding public meetings preferably in different locations through out Washington, New Preston and Marbledale.

At the present time there is approximately 18-19% of permanently preserved land in the town of Washington. About 50% of land in Washington is in 490 which is not considered permanently preserved. Chick Treadway asked about unbuildable land in town. Ms. Payne referred to the Natural Resource Inventory Report which states the following areas subtracted from buildout consideration: permanently protected 3,666acres - 14.80%, wetlands 2,865acres - 11.60%, watercourses 524acres - 2.10% and slopes over 25% 1,916acres - 7.75% these categories do overlap but GIS indicates that the total acreage subtracted is 8,103acres - 32.77%.

Members were given packets which consisted of the following items: The Open Space Plan, Connecticut State Statute Chapter 97 Sec. 7-131a, the Open Space and Land Acquisition Fund Ordinance, pages 38-39 of the Natural Resource Inventory Report, Chapter 3 of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development and Jim Gibbons 10 Steps In Developing An Open Space Plan. Susan Payne asked members to read through these documents and familiarize themselves with them.

Susan stated that the first job for this committee is to assess public support for open space preservation and preservation of rural character. Elaine Luckey asked if this committee would be working in conjunction with the housing committee? Mr. Rimsky agreed that the two committees should form a unified front and work together. Ms. Payne believes that the housing committee is still in the planning stages. First Selectman Dick Sears interjected that the housing committee will first meet in April. Ms. Doran added that we need facts to enlighten the public. Mr. Treadway asked about getting people to attend the meetings. Mr. Rimsky suggested using local sponsors i.e. churches, New Preston Lady's Club.

Ms. Payne informed members that the Conservation Commission had an Open Space Inventory Subcommittee which assessed parcels in town based on natural resources.

Dimitri Rimsky asked about being proactive in the preservation of farmland. Utilizing other agricultural aspects for farmland such as garden plants, stock breeding and organic farming. Ms. Doran added that there is a demand in an upscale market for organic items. Ms. Payne encourages everybody to do their own research and gather information on their topics. A future issue to consider is water resources.

In closing Susan stated that the first step is to come up with a plan to present the question of open space preservation to the community in a way which will instigate input from the public.

This committee will continue to meet the third Wednesday of the month.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15pm.

Next scheduled meeting of the Open Space Committee is April 21st at 5:00pm.

Submitted subject to approval,

Pamela L. Osborne, Secretary