

# April 21, 2004

## OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

**Present:** Susan Payne, Elaine Luckey, Dimitri Rimsky, Dan Sherr, Patti Doran, Diane Williams, Phil Gorrvan, Colleen Weston, Chick Treadway

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

Ms. Payne informed the members that Betsy Corrigan has resigned from the Committee. She asked if anyone had any thoughts on whom to invite to take her place. Dimitri Rimsky asked if anyone from Inland-Wetlands was on the Committee. No, and no one has volunteered from that Commission nor from Zoning or ZBA.

Approval of the 3/17/04 minutes.

MOTION: To approve the 3/17/04 minutes as corrected:

Pg.2, Par.4, Line 2: .....which will **elicit** input.....

By Mr. Sherr, seconded by Ms. Doran and passed 9-0.

Ms. Payne announced that WEC is sponsoring a clean-up along the Town Greenway on Sunday, May 2nd. The Town will be divided into sectors. Groups and individuals will be responsible to clean certain areas. Sign-up sheet will be available at the Town Hall the week before and also on Sunday, May 2 between 1 and 3PM. Denise Arturi sent a notice about recycling old sneakers. A collection barrel will be in the Town Hall the week of 4/26 - 4/30 and also on May 2 between 1 and 3PM.

Susan Payne reported the Housing Committee has met a couple of times. They have no Chairman yet, First Selectman Dick Sears has been convening the group. She will check to see if they are ready to meet with the Open Space Committee.

Patti Doran said she had just begun to research farming. She suggested it would be nice to have a brochure to hand out to those interested in organic farming. Dimitri Rimsky noted there is a website on organic farming. Ms. Doran said she has been trying to meet with someone in Roxbury to discuss the farming issue. Mr. Treadway asked how Roxbury attracts people to get into farming. Ms. Payne replied they have a Farm Lease Trust. Elaine Luckey and Dan Sherr both said they had met Michael Keilty who teaches a course in organic farming - he would be a good contact. Susan Payne referred to the Natural Resource Inventory Report, page 36, concerning farmland and thought the Committee should think about exploring the Town Farm concept as a way to create farm awareness.

Ms. Payne said the Committee needs to focus on how to talk about open space to the community; to create an awareness. It must be made clear that a lot of open space in town is unprotected. Ms. Doran commented that many people don't make the connection between open space and survival. Open space is a lifeline. Ms. Payne noted both forestland and water are as important as open space. Mr. Rimsky said the members need ready answers to give people as to why open space is important. Perhaps get them to see from an economic point of view that their property values will be enhanced. Ms. Payne said the members need to know what the key questions are going to be and how to answer them.

Colleen Weston said members need to think of specific items that will appeal to people such as her experience of seeing a small town exploited by a big developer and how the school system became

overcrowded. Make them see that open space will help protect their quality of life. Patti Doran said that is hard to do in a simple way. Mr. Treadway asked if it would be possible to combine the Housing and Open Space Committees in order to control development and control the impact on the tax rate. But, he added, there must be some growth to have a balance. Ms. Doran agreed, the community must be diversified or it will be off balance. Mr. Rimsky said another component is a balance between land set aside and land available for housing. Developers should be encouraged to have open space and also have a mix of house values. Mr. Sherr said the context of how people talk about open space is all relative. Someone moving from the city to a housing development feels they are moving to the country. He spoke of "vest pocket parks" - small areas of open space. Quality of life is psychological as well as visual. Members should be careful how they define open space - does it renew your spirit? All agreed that was a good question.

Elaine Luckey suggested the members need to know first, where they are headed before involving others, such as a focus group. A guide is needed; points for people to discuss. Someone asked exactly what is a focus group. A cross section of people in town. Susan Payne said a positive argument could be made that open space has enhanced property values and the grand list. Patti Doran said, on the other hand, people might argue that's why it is so expensive only millionaires can live here. Dimitri Rimsky added many people are concerned that due to expense their children will not be able to afford a house in town. Ms. Payne said it will be a goal for all to work on together. Ms. Doran said it will be difficult. Mr. Rimsky said it is an issue where emotions run high.

Susan Payne asked Dan Sherr how to organize. Mr. Sherr said Elaine has it right. He said he could lead the Committee on a brain storming session and come up with 8 or 10 items. Mr. Treadway said the Housing Committee could do the same thing and then the two Committees could get together and consolidate their lists. Mr. Sherr suggested the members run their list through a focus group first (Housing can sit in if they wish) and then Housing can do the same thing. After that the two lists could be consolidated. Colleen said she likes Dan's plan. All agreed. Susan Payne asked Patti Doran if she would be liaison between Housing and Open Space and tell them at their next meeting how Open Space Committee is thinking of proceeding and invite them to come to the May meeting. Ms. Doran said she would do her best. Ms. Payne said all could be further refined at the June meeting and perhaps try a focus group in July. She asked Mr. Sherr if he could develop a presentation to take to community groups. Presentations should be informal and conversational with the audience. Mr. Sherr said he could.

Mr. Rimsky suggested each member contact three people before the next meeting to see what their thoughts are on open space. All members thought that was a good idea. A discussion followed and they decided upon six questions to ask.

1. What does open space mean to you?
2. What value do you put on open space?
3. How would acquiring more open space affect your neighborhood?
4. Do you believe the Committee should be actively involved in adding to Washington's open space?
5. When you drive through town, do you think of Washington as having a lot of open space?
6. Do you have any ideas about how we can acquire open space?

It was noted that these questions will open conversations on other aspects to open space. They will also help to identify misinformation.

Susan Payne ended the meeting by saying all the members will come back next time with all they have

gleaned from their conversations with townspeople. Hope Dan Sherr can be at the next meeting. Patti Doran will share with Housing what the members are doing and they are welcome to sit in on the May meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30PM.

Next scheduled meeting of the Open Space Committee is May 19th at 5:00PM.

Submitted subject to approval,

Martha T. Shade, Secretary