

May 19, 2004

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Present: Patti Doran, Elaine Luckey, Susan Payne, Dan Sherr, Colleen Weston, Diane Williams

Guests: Richard Sears First Selectman, Chris Charles, Press

The meeting was called to order at 5:10pm by Chairperson Susan Payne.

MOTION: to accept the minutes of the April 21, 2004 meeting with the following amendments; page (1) fourth paragraph, fifth line should read Ms. Payne replied they have a Farm Lease Program. (delete Trust); page (2) second paragraph, third line should read these experiences could help them see ...; page (3), paragraph one should read Ms. Weston suggested Was made by Ms. Luckey, seconded by Ms. Doran and passed unanimously.

First Selectman Dick Sears mentioned that the questions and process which were circulated to members of the Open Space Committee were great and he was adapting them for his Housing Committee use.

At this point members went through the (6) questions they asked various townspeople, Mr. Sherr documents their responses and will type up a summary to be emailed to members of the Open Space Committee.

The questions were:

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

Chris Charles made the observation that Washington has done a good job with land use management and has been able to protect a great deal of the environment. One of the things that has enabled this to happen is the tax deductions that are available for setting aside open space, but it is also available for gifting land for limited equity parcels. This would take the high land prices out of the housing component, the difference between a house in Washington and a house in New Milford is the price of the land. When people react against zoning because it impedes the ability for people to have affordable housing it's up to "us" to make sure that the conditions that allow open space also allow for limited equity parcels. Mr. Charles also encouraged members to utilize information in the Open Space Steering Committee Report and Open Space Plan.

Susan Payne added that people need to have a clear concept of what open space is and clarification on ways to acquire open space. They need to be aware of the many ways that have already been utilized to acquire open space. Do people know for instance that sections of both Averill and Seymour farms are already preserved? Mr. Sherr interjected that locations like Averill Farm are not obvious.

Mr. Sears stated that the Housing Committee is about a step behind the Open Space Committee and possibly by July the two groups could meet together.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55pm.

Next scheduled meeting of the Open Space Committee is June 16, 2004 at 5:00pm.

Submitted subject to approval,

Pamela L. Osborne, Secretary