

# Hamilton Open Space Committee

Minutes of Meeting

September 29, 2015

Held at Hamilton-Wenham Public Library

Members Present: Nancy Baker, Gretel Clark, Jacqueline Hodge, Zachary Peters, George Tarr,  
Emer McCourt, Anne Gero

Others present: Rosemary Kennedy and Selectman, Jeff Hubbard

Chair Baker opened the meeting at 6:35 pm

Review of Minutes of three previous meetings: accepted with one date change and the spelling of Zach Peter's name.

## Old Business:

Zach gave a summary of the OSC's letter of evaluation of Marc Johnson's draft Land Acquisition Policy at the Conservation Commission's September 9<sup>th</sup> meeting . It was described by Gretel and George as a clear and compelling presentation. The Conservation Commission accepted it and said they would pass it on to the other appropriate Boards. The Con Com agreed to post all of the OSC's minutes and papers without alteration.

## Organizing the Open Space Committee

Nancy reviewed what the OSC's previous meetings have produced as to how the Committee sees its role. This included

- Identifying issues relating to Hamilton Open Space that are raised by selectmen and town boards and provide input;
- Derive our role from activities such as comments and critique of the current Draft Land Acquisition Policy;
- Reach out to other open space organizations in the region, including a letter of introduction to the Essex County Greenbelt;
- Help to educate and to participate in events such as Trails Day, outreach to landowners; aid in the needs of the Conservation Commission; and be generally aware/involved in community activities relating to open space.

Zach emphasized our need to connect with the other land related organizations such as Greenbelt, the land Trusts and the Community Preservation Committee. He also suggested that the old survey of the town conducted for the Master Plan as to development and preservation priorities should be implemented again, using the same instrument, so that one could get a comparison of possible opinion/attitude change since the original survey was implemented.

His comment was prompted by his observation of responses to the Hamilton Open Space and Master Plan Survey results of 2002. When given the option of checking “Yes,” “No,” and “No Opinion,” to the question under Open Space, Recreation & Historic, Part III. Preservation—“Should the Town of Hamilton Put more effort into protecting open space?” 74% of the respondents checked “yes.”

The Committee then looked at the 5 “Goals and Objectives” identified in the current Open Space and Recreation Plan with a critical eye as to what was feasible for the group to tackle. All, of course, were seen as an integral part of the first goal, which is to “preserve and enhance open space . . .” The Committee, however, thought that this goal should be its primary objective.

A close scrutiny of that Goal produced the following conclusions: Objective #1: “improvement of cartography,” was assumed to have been accomplished. However, Nancy Baker questioned whether this was still relevant to the goal. The second Objective under Goal 1 “to educate owners of large parcels on the advantages of preserving open space” was seen as an important function for the Committee to address. Objective #3 under Goal 1: to “facilitate smart growth” was not seen as an appropriate issue on which the group should focus. This objective is currently being addressed by the Hamilton Development Corporation. The Committee felt its role here should be just to comment on current proposals. The last Objective under Goal #1, “coordinate open space initiatives” was strongly endorsed by the group—to coordinate with the appropriate land related organizations to preserve open space.

With this in mind, Zach volunteered to write a mission statement that would capture the Committee’s goals and objectives. He also said that he would incorporate this into a letter of introduction from the Committee to other appropriate land boards and committees, asking them how we might be able to assist them.

As for the other Goals: #2, protecting water resources; #3, protecting wildlife habitat; #4, supporting agriculture and forestry; and #5 , preserving, maintaining and enhancing

a trail system and passive recreation facilities—the Committee saw itself supporting these goals and taking action where appropriate..

Jackie and Nancy both spoke of the phenomenon of our surrounding towns (Essex, Ipswich, Gloucester, etc.) that have capitalized successfully on branding themselves as “the clamming town,” “the historic town,” “the seafaring/whaling town”, etc. and proposed that Hamilton should do the same as the “horse town” or the town with lots of recreational open space (for cross country skiing, horseback riding, hiking, etc.) bringing attention to the importance of the town supporting the acquisition of Sagamore Hill.

### Sagamore Hill

Chris LaPointe’s presentation to the Board of Selectmen was discussed. Due to the presence of Jeff Hubbard, the Committee learned that the Board of Selectmen took no vote. Discussion followed concerning the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) proposing to raise the tax surcharge for the CPA funds in town to 3% (that would not be available in time for this project.) There was recognition that there are a number of other projects coming before the CPC this year, and that the CPC will be deciding which ones to endorse at their upcoming meeting on October 8. Members of the Committee were urged to be present at that meeting to provide support for the project. Nancy noted that the CPA was originally intended as enabling legislation for the preservation of open space. Now, after all the years CPA funds have been available in Hamilton, only one land project has been funded (the Donovan Fields at the base of Sagamore Hill) and even that falls under the heading of Recreation. Everyone concurred that the Committee’s support for this project was paramount. Jackie suggested the creation of a fact sheet as to why support for the Sagamore Hill project was important. Emer volunteered to get Chris LaPointe’s point by point arguments/facts in support of the project and proposed showing how this property differs from the acquisition of the Patton property.

Anne said she would draw up a statement (with support points) for Nancy to “tweak” and subsequently for the Committee members to review vis a vis the Sagamore Hill property prior to the CPC meeting on October 8.

At that point, a Library employee informed the committee the building was closing. Therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Next meeting was set to take place on October 13.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gretel Clark