

Hamilton Open Space Committee
Minutes of Meeting of February 22, 2016
Meeting Held at Hamilton Library

Members Present: Nancy Baker, Jacqueline Hodge, Zachary Peters, Anne Gero, Rosemary Kennedy. Gretel Clark arrived at 6:40.

Also in attendance: George Tarr. Chris LaPointe from Greenbelt arrived at 6:30

Ms. Baker opened the meeting at 6:07 pm.

Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the January 12, 2015 meeting were approved.

Coordinator Position

Ms. Baker announced that Ms. Gero has resigned as the Coordinator for the Open Space Committee (OSC), and asked for a volunteer for this role. A brief discussion ensued regarding the duties of the Coordinator. Since there were no volunteers, it was decided to postpone this issue until Ms. Clark and Ms. McCourt were asked if they would be willing to serve as the Coordinator.

Mission Statement

Ms. Hodge handed out comments on the draft Mission Statement that had been provided to her by a land use attorney. It was agreed that the members would review these comments and provide our thoughts to Mr. Peters by Wednesday, March 9th. Mr. Peters will organize these comments and we will try to finalize the Mission Statement at our next meeting.

Sagamore Hill Project

Mr. LaPointe provided an update on the Sagamore Hill project. According to Mr. LaPointe, there is still a \$400,000 funding gap but Greenbelt remains confident that it can raise this money through private donations or borrowing. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) which has signed the P&S for the Hamilton portion of the project, must commit to the purchase by the end of April for a closing in May. Greenbelt will acquire the fee from TPL and the Town of Hamilton will acquire the conservation restriction (CR) from Greenbelt sometime during the summer since the \$1million Landscape Partnership Grant will not be available until FY17.

Greenbelt has started to draft the CR that it would sign with the Hamilton Conservation Commission. The issue is how the Town of Hamilton will choose to review/negotiate this document. Will there be a small committee formed? If so, who will be on it?

A Management Plan also will be drafted for the project. This will cover items such as parking, field mowing, signage, hours, etc. Greenbelt will be seeking input from the Town of Hamilton and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation Resources on this document. Greenbelt has not yet begun drafting this document.

Greenbelt is also working on the CRs that it will be signing with adjacent landowners in order to have full 500 acres necessary to qualify for the Landscape Partnership Grant. He explained that these CRs will not require public access. Instead, they will encourage public access, and the Essex County Trails Association will work with these landowners to determine if they will be willing to allow public access.

OSC/Greenbelt Collaboration re: Open Space

Mr. LaPointe explained that Greenbelt has characterized all properties in Essex County greater than 5 acres for their natural resource/conservation importance. Greenbelt has given them each a priority score of 1-3, with 1 being the highest priority. Greenbelt tries to maintain contact with the owners of these properties through mailings, personal outreach, etc. Through this system, Greenbelt is currently tracking approximately 3,000 landowners in Essex County.

The Greenbelt property characterization system is currently a bit out of date, and Greenbelt is in the process of migrating all of the property data to a new system. However, Mr. LaPointe offered to attend a future OSC meeting with several Greenbelt maps in hand in order to review with us the Chapter 61 properties and other important properties in Hamilton.

Mr. LaPointe emphasized that open space committees often serve very important functions for Greenbelt. They can be the “ears on the ground” and are often the ones that contact Greenbelt when there is a change in the status of a property. In addition, the members of the open space committees may have personal relationships with the owners of some of the important open space properties. These relationships can be helpful to Greenbelt as it seeks to inform owners of their options for conserving land.

Mr. LaPointe noted that the open space committee in West Newbury recently adopted a policy outlining the steps that should be taken if the town receives a right of refusal for a Chapter 61 property. The OSC briefly discussed that it would be helpful if Hamilton had such a policy to supplement the Land Acquisition Policy recently adopted by the Hamilton Board of Selectmen (BOS). Mr. LaPointe said that he would send us a copy of policy adopted by West Newbury.

Town Survey

Sean Farrell, a member of the BOS, has taken the lead for the BOS in updating the prior town survey questionnaire. The BOS is intending to do a town-wide survey again this year. Mr. Farrell recently reached out to Jim Hankin and asked him if the OSC would review the portions of the questionnaire that relate to open space.

Ms. Baker asked the members of the OSC to review the open space portion of the previous questionnaire so that it could be discussed by the OSC at its next meeting.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that the OSC would meet again on Wednesday, March 16th at 6:30

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.