



OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Friday, December 6, 2019

7:30 AM

Acton Town Hall

472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720

Room 9

Attendees: Andy Magee, Dick Hatfield, Will Hill, David Martin, Matt Mostoller, Terry Maitland, Tom Tidman

Guests: Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Joe Will, Franny Osmund

Recorder: Fran Portante

I. Regular Business

1. Review of meeting minutes from Friday, November 1, 2019: Terry moved to accept the minutes of November 1, 2019, Dick seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.
2. Review of on-going issues:
 - Hebert Farm: still waiting on appraiser
 - Piper Lane: The ZBA hearing has been postponed until February, after the Conservation Commission has completed its peer review process. The Commission has hired BSC Group for the review.
 - Wetherbee Street: The House is on the market. No additional information.
3. Brief Review as necessary:
 - 183 Newtown Road: Susan met with the landowner who stated that he would like something of value, such as lower taxes, in exchange for giving the parcels to the town.
 - Brucewood Lots: The assessors are evaluating these lots, which are mostly wetlands and of low value. There are taxes owed on the property. Tom suggested that the only value would be a possible tie into the Auto Auction property, creating a corridor that would lead to the School Street fields. Tom will set up meeting with Andy, Brian McMullen and himself to discuss the properties and devise a strategy for moving forward. Franny mentioned that Littleton is looking for opportunities to connect the bike trails, BFRT and ARRT. Joe pointed out that the plans for the Route 2 BFRT bridge is allowing for a future exit that could lead to the School Street fields.
 - Stonefield Farm: no update
 - 53 River Street: The report has come back on the dam renewal. The town will be looking for additional funding sources. The Land Use Department, with Selby as Director of Land

Use and Economic Development, is managing this project.

- Triangle Farm: Andy sent letter to the owner, but has had no feedback. Jamie Eldridge is a friend of owner, and Andy will work through Jamie for any future outreach.
- 180 Newtown Road: The Planning Board will review this project at the Dec. 16 meeting.
- 108 Nonset Path: This is primarily non-buildable wetland.
- Acton Dog Park Proposal: the BoS has dropped the DPW proposal, since they are reluctant to disturb the department again, having already shifted their location to accommodate Miracle Field. There are 2 sites still under consideration on the Walker Property. The BoS is still open to arguments for proposed sites. Andy had sent a letter to the BoS stating the Open Space Committee's position opposing the DPW site if it would require significant clearing of an undeveloped portion of the parcel.

II. New/Special Business

1. 2020 Community Preservation Act Proposal Presentation: the OSC presentation is scheduled for Dec. 19, at 8:00PM. Andy will put the presentation together. Currently \$2.75M in application requests have been submitted, and there is \$1.2M available to allocate. Open Space is asking for \$400K.
2. River St.: CPA request has been assigned to Historic and Recreation categories.
3. Morrison Farm Discussion: Joe Will presented the Committee with a report of the current status of the effort at Morrison Farm. (see attachment with Joe Will's status report). The MFC was chaired by Maryann Ashton, who will be reportedly be moving out of Acton shortly. The committee has not met since Jan. 2016. Andy noted that he resigned from the committee several years ago. Joe brought his concerns to the OSC based on Tom Tidman's recommendation. At this time, the BoS are at a stalemate concerning the Farm. There appears to be little interest in continuing the committee. Originally, the land was envisioned with some portion being converted to playing fields. This eventually was deemed impractical as it would require extensive fill and grading to make level fields and other fields in town became available, thus causing the demand to disappear. A number of projects have been completed, using CPA funds, through the Department of Natural Resources. Tom continues to consult with Mary Ann and Ann Chang as each of the CPA projects is implemented. One project remains to be completed. Joe pointed out that a large portion of the north side of the property is forested and had been targeted for a Conservation Restriction. He suggested that the placement of a conservation restriction on this portion of the property move forward and the Committee agreed. Tom will initiate the process.
4. Special Town Meeting- Schools and Sewers: The BoS is considering splitting the sewer project into 2 phases, installing just the required infrastructure to accommodate the new twin schools. While this can ultimately result in more open space in West Acton, zoning will control density of development.

III. Consent Items

None

Meeting was adjourned 8:30AM.

Next Meeting: Friday, January 3, 2020, 7:30 AM
Room 9, Town Hall, 472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720

Additional materials can be found here: None

For more information about the Open Space Committee contact Tom
Tidman at tidman@acton-ma.gov or (978) 929-6634.

Attachment: Morrison Farm Status:

Morrison Farm and the Morrison Farm Committee

Abbreviations used:

BFRT: Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

BoS: Board of Selectmen

CPA: Community Preservation Act

IHP: Ice House Pond

IHPP: Ice House Pond Parking

LSC: Land Stewardship Committee

MFC: Morrison Farm Committee

Issue 1: It has always been the intention of interested parties to designate the wooded section to the north of the main meadow as Conservation Land. Tom Tidman suggests that the process should begin with the OSC.

Issue 2: What is the status of the MFC?

MFC's last meeting with approved minutes: 10/19/15

MFC's last meeting with draft minutes (not yet approved): 01/14/16

The two minutes cited above show the following MFC members: Charlie Aaronson, Mary Ann Ashton (Chair, since moved out of town), Leanne Baxter, Jon Benson, Ann Chang, Kitty Cunkelman, Peter Grover, Andy Magee (since resigned), William Mullin, Doug Tindal

Whether to disband the MFC has been discussed by the BoS, with no action. It is on the BoS's "Short Term Goals" list for Fiscal Year 2021.

Morrison Farm (and adjacent land) activities since 01/14/16, as well as future possibilities:

- a) Restoration of the Robbins Homestead foundation (CPA funded)
- b) Digging of a well to the east of the farmhouse and installation of pipes for the irrigation of the Community Garden (CPA funded)
- c) Installation of a storage shed in the paddock to the east of the farmhouse to help with the water from the well, and to serve as storage for LSC and Town equipment
- d) CPA-funded development of the IHPP, and continued development of the IHP historic park next to the parking, as well as the construction of the IHP walkway north along the west side of IHP. Whether that walkway will ultimately be extended to the historic causeway further north, as well as restoration of the causeway itself (to close a loop around IHP) is open for discussion.
- e) Beaver damming at the causeway, and elsewhere, above the pond, and the resulting high water upstream (but no higher than springtime floods)
- f) Clearing of a third large meadow between the IHPP and the original lower wet meadow-a significant removal of invasive plants.
- g) Completion of Phase A of the BFRT (Phase C spanning Route 2 s/b completed by 2021 thus completing the trail from Lowell to Concord's Powder Mill Road)
- h) Development of the East Acton Village Green (currently seeking CPA funding).
- i) Recent consideration of locating a dog park at the farm
- j) Efforts by the LSC to identify and blaze principal trails on the property, do some modest trail relocation, and do stone wall recovery work alongside parts of the main

meadow; also, rehabilitation of a substantial blackberry patch, and ongoing efforts to remove invasive plants.

k) Town transfer of Community Garden management from the Recreation Department to the Cemetery Department.

l) Possible other things (monarch butterfly habitat comes to mind).

Re the Morrison Farm farmhouse: Farmhouse options were to have been gathered and summarized by Katie Green (8oS meeting xxlxx/xx), but nothing has happened. Note in the 01/14/16 minutes, the MFC voted unanimously that the farmhouse be razed.

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