

## Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: March 27, 2023

Time: 7:06 p.m.

Place: Internet/Zoom call hosted by Molly Shea

### **Attendees:**

Members: Wayne Castonguay Co-Chair, Erin Coates-Connor, Ralph Williams, Monty Monroe, Andrea Lacroix, Katie Hone

Associates: Ed Monnelly, Larry Eliot

Staff: Molly Shea, Open Space Manager, Beth O'Connor, Open Space Steward

### 1. Citizen queries

None

### 2. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes (February 23, 2023)

Andrea moved to accept the minutes from the February 2023 meeting, seconded by Monty, passed unanimously.

### 3. Plover Hill Cell Tower Lease Status Update

Two requests for proposals were accepted – Verizon and ATT. Verizon is a new lease. ATT is an existing lease for 20 years now. ATT is now reviewing the contract. Payments are currently coming in at the current rate. Their contract should be finalized and wrapped up in the next couple of months. The final contract will require Select Board signature.

The Verizon lease is still before Town Council, they have not finished reviewing yet. The draft we sent was modeled after ATT, so it should be reviewed and passed quickly.

Beth thinks the contracts should be all finalized by the start of the next fiscal year, July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### 4. Mile Lane Farm Access Road Status Update

Beth updated us on this project. The farm access road is a work in progress. It was initially constructed to a degree that it was passable for the Marini family to farm last season. The expectation is that they will be farming it again this season. The Select Board has control of 10 acres on the Kozeneski land.

The town has drafted a new lease between the town, water department, and the Marinis – two five-year terms. The Town Council is currently reviewing the lease. There's a spring town meeting warrant article because an extended lease of that timeframe requires town meeting

approval. In the meantime, we are working on the actual language of the lease to talk to the specifications of what they can and can't do there.

We've had a couple of meetings with Mike Marini on the site and there is mutual understanding of the care and use of the land.

Going forward, the town will likely need to button up their legal requirements for entering into long-term leases for farm operations because the long-term leases are preferred by farmers.

The public trail on the Kozeneski part of the property will be accessible from Mile Lane. There's a split-rail fence that guides people through the sub-division and then puts people into the field. It's unclear when the access road on the north side will be ready. On the south side, going up to Turkey Hill from Linebrook Road, there's currently no access but Greenbelt has the intention to get to it.

#### 5. 2023 Open Space Program / Committee Goals and Priorities – continued conversation

At the last meeting, OSC members seemed happy with the list. Wayne opened the conversation up to one last round of comments/feedback on the list. Molly will send out the updated list by email after today's meeting.

**Bylaw Updates:** Ralph commented on the Bylaw Updates: review current language of the current law and determine if it makes sense given the parcels that are available. Do the percentages make sense? Focus on the Open Space portion of the law. Wayne added that maybe it would be good to add open space zoning to the Bylaw. Molly suggested someone go through the entire Bylaw and make note of what needs updating.

**Prioritization of Parcels:** Wayne and Ralph volunteered to be on a subcommittee. Andrea volunteered to join the subcommittee.

**Social Media/Outreach/Community Engagement:** Would we want our own page, or use the town's existing page? Leah at Town Hall said she would be happy to post on the town's Facebook page. Although the town website has the most up-to-date information, Katie suggested that a lot of younger citizens don't go to the town website. We could start slowly with a post every month or every couple of months. Beth suggested that we start by sharing a post about the story maps. Monty asked about a regular column in the local paper, maybe once a month; the issue is about who has the capacity to put that together. An OSC member would need to volunteer to write that column. Wayne suggested if each member writes one a year, it could have a good impact without too much work from any one person. There seemed to be agreement among members of not wanting to manage our own social media pages to start, but using the Town's established social media to share our updates and direct people to the town website for more information.

**Trail Connections:** Ralph and Monty offered to be a subcommittee on this one. Monty asked if we can we discuss whether we could put a trail on the south side of Kamon field (Scott Hill Road) to make a connection to south Kamon to 161 Topsfield. Do we want to use the Scott Hill Road parcel that is sitting off to the side and not being used, but it could potentially be used to

connect. Unclear if it's town property. Detailed items like this would be best worked out in the subcommittee, not necessarily the whole committee.

On the question of whether we look into one trail connection area in particular or expand the scope further, Erin suggested we make a prioritized list to work through. Molly suggested that creating a list of steps that need to be considered and accomplished for each trail connection would be a beneficial resource. Having a detailed process outlined before targeting specific connections would clarify roles and methods. Beth said she would be willing to work on this sort of list / general process with the subcommittee members. It would be a good reference and guidance document to pass onto the future.

Erin suggested a reference document with a listing of trail connections of interest, a summary of what we know, what we don't know, what steps need to be taken to get more information or make more progress, and members update as any progress is made. Ralph said the ECTA is already putting together a lot of information like this, so we should work with them.

Wayne suggested we identify how these goals fit within OSRP goals.

## 6. Remote Public Meeting Update

A proposal was passed by the legislation to extend the remote meeting allowance for two more years, until March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025. The Governor just needs to sign it and then it will become official. The legislation would allow us to meet remotely, in person, or hybrid (but the hybrid isn't a viable option right now due to technical issues).

The convenience factor makes it appealing to stay remote. Maybe we could add in some occasional in-person meetings?

We would be more effective meeting in person sometimes, especially when looking at maps and prioritizing lists. We just need to call it by the time the agenda is posted.

Wayne suggested that next meeting we map out the year to plan in-person vs. video.

Molly said she can send out a draft agenda the week in advance and take feedback about whether members think it would be best to meet in person or remote.

## 7. Other Items not Reasonably Anticipated

Monty requested guidance of the committee on the matter of the small field to the north side of Kamon Farm not being open to the public yet. Monty has been talking to Greenbelt about it, but nothing has been done yet. Is there anything more to reasonably do about it? Wayne suggested that these things can take some time, and this hasn't been a long time to wait, relative to other projects. We do know that Greenbelt has been made aware of this. Beth thinks we should give Greenbelt a bit more space to work on this as there's a lot at play in that one area.

There will be a Celebration to honor Larry Eliot for his work on the Ipswich Bay Circuit Trail this Saturday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 11am at the Ipswich Public Library. RSVP is requested.

Molly updated us on ORA appeal, which will be brought in front of the land court and a summary judgement hearing is scheduled for tomorrow March 28<sup>th</sup> at 2pm.

#### 8. Executive Session

The committee entered Executive Session at 8:42 p.m. on a motion from Andrea to enter Executive Session and then adjourn the meeting from Executive Session, seconded by Ralph, and passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Coates-Connor