

## Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: July 26, 2021

Time: 7:02 p.m.

Place: Internet/Zoom call hosted by Beth O'Connor

### **Attendees:**

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

Associates: Larry Eliot, Monty Monroe, Ed Monnelly

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

Guests: Brian Hone, Chris Chapman

### 1. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes (June 2021)

Jeff moved to accept the minutes, Katie seconded, approved unanimously.

### 2. Citizen queries

None.

### 3. Molly Shea Open Space Protection Manager Introductions

Members and the new open space manager introduced themselves.

### 4. Cycle Safe Task Force update – Brian Hone & Chris Chapman

The Cycle Safe Task Force committee was founded about a year ago due to many deaths of bicyclists from being struck by cars. The committee also addresses pedestrian/traffic concerns. They proposed the creation of a small committee that acts similar to the Design Review Board to help plan for non-automotive transport as part of road planning projects. The proposal is currently in front of the Select Board and the Select Board is interested in it. Cycle Safe Task Force also has the support of DPW and the Planning Board.

Brian laid out the plans for the next steps: Define the scope and the makeup of the group; how many members, who appoints them, open meeting law requirements, etc.

Ed addressed a potential citizen outreach issue: that community members will be interested when roads in their neighborhoods are up for renewal, but they might not be interested in a neighborhood across town. Brian said that adding sidewalks to neighborhoods can help connect neighbors, so outreach on this issue could be a great way to get neighbors connected.

Beth asked if the focus is on built infrastructure or does it also include natural settings like trails. Brian said they are mostly looking at built infrastructure, but with trails in mind. Having safe connections on roads between trails is a focus.

Wayne stated that the OSC is excited to be allies and resources on this issue.

#### 5. Committee Membership Appointments/Terms

Wayne explained how the annual process of re-appointing committee members can be a hassle, so there was a proposal to extend the term from one year to three years. A warrant article was previously proposed for a town meeting, but the article was deemed faulty and pulled at the last minute, then got dropped. Tom Murphy asked if we want to rekindle this issue at the fall town meeting. Wayne asked committee members to weigh in about whether we should pick this effort back up or abandon it.

Jeff shared that it wasn't a big hassle for him to go into town hall and get re-appointed. Katie and Erin shared the same.

Katie questioned if a three-year term might be a deterrent to some potential members from joining the committee if they don't want to make that long of a commitment.

Ralph and Wayne discussed how it can be easy to forget to go in to get re-appointed, which means the member is not official. However, until someone submits a resignation letter, they are still de-facto on the committee.

Beth suggested an annual reminder on the staff members' calendars to check in and remind members about renewal.

Based on this discussion, Wayne concluded that there isn't enough Committee interest on this right now and we should table this issue for now.

#### 6. 55 Waldingfield Road, ORA – Great Estates Preservation Zoning

Town meeting approved the edit to the bylaw. ORA filed an application with the town. There is a public folder under the Planning Board for their special permit under the Great Estates bylaw. The folder hasn't been completely reviewed yet. The OSC should look closely at the open space amenities.

Wayne reminded the group that the intention behind this bylaw is to allow a commercial development in an area where they would not normally be allowed in exchange for open space preservation and public access.

Thursday, August 5<sup>th</sup> is the preliminary Planning Board hearing.

Beth shared what she has seen so far in the proposal. An open space proposal doesn't appear clear in the plans, and there also seems to be a lack of proposed trails, existing and new. Beth encouraged OSC members to attend the Planning Board hearings.

Ralph suggested someone should create an email list to send to whoever is interested with links to Zoom meetings and meeting details. Wayne attended a meeting a couple of weeks ago and thought ORA's presentation sounded too good to be true when compared to their actual proposal. We need to watch and make sure they do what they promised to do. The proposal doesn't make clear which land is being preserved and which trails will be protected, but the presentation at the meeting discussed land preservation acreage well over the minimum 40% requirement.

Does ORA consider the land that has already been protected as part of their 40% open space preservation?

Ralph stated that it's essential to get a conservation restriction as well as a separate trail easement, because not all of the trails go through areas that are preserved and we need a way to access the trails.

Katie stated that the additional office space and wellness building in the proposal is also unclear – is this a separate building and bigger footprint?

Beth questioned if ORA should be allowed to get both phases of their project approved while only presenting the first phase. How do we know they won't change things in the second phase, similar to what happened with the Linebrook Road project.

Monty asked what do we consider an adequate system of access for the public? Ralph answered that we want non-motorized passive recreation – walking, skiing, riding, biking. Trails need to be demarcated on the plans, and should only be relocated by mutual agreement. Right now there's no formal trail access in the books, and no language for trails in the conservation restriction.

Beth confirmed that either she or Molly will send out information about the upcoming hearings.

## 7. Kamon & Koseneski Project Update

Kamon - Beth shared that the conservation restriction terms have been agreed to by the town and Greenbelt and approved by EEA. We expect to go to closing to acquire the 93 acres of conservation restriction in the first or second week of August. Beth will work on the baseline documentation report. Top priorities after closing are working on trails and parking areas.

Koseneski – for the northern back parcel, which is phase 3, the developer offered the land to the town for water protection. A meeting between developers and the town was held to discuss intentions for the land. Beth expects this to come to town meeting this fall for the town to vote on the land to be taken into care, custody, and control by water commissioners. Then the town would work with Marini Farm to agree on some strict land use terms – e.g. approved fertilizers.

Beth is working with boy scouts to work on the trail connector across Mile Lane. The developer will be responsible to construct the trail that goes through the development and out to Linebrook Road when they start building the phase 3 development.

## 8. Future OSC Meetings in person / Zoom

Wayne opened the floor to discuss future meetings: should we continue to meet on Zoom for now or do we want to think about in-person meetings?

Katie suggested we table the conversation for another month until we see what's happening with the Delta variant and wait until it is under control. Wayne, Erin, and Andrea agreed with Katie. Jeff shared that he also prefers Zoom meeting for logistics reasons in addition to Covid safety.

## 9. Other Items not reasonably anticipated

Chebacco woods: The 60 acres close to route 122 has been sold to a developer. The developer is proposing a huge 60 building development. There are some resource concerns; there would be a lot of wetland crossings and it's on the edge of two watersheds. A group formed called Save Chebacco Woods to rally support against the development. ECTA is interested in this area as well. Development could impact trail connections between Ipswich to Hamilton and Essex.

Status of ECTA trails: Monty asked what is the status of trails that are marked on the ECTA maps that can't be found. Can we check the status of those trails? i.e. could there be a mistake on the map or missing trailhead signs?

Beth said ECTA maps don't always distinguish between public and private land, but she could help look at this if the trails are on public land. Beth suggested keeping a log of where the discrepancies are and then set up time with Carole Lloyd, the ECTA Trail Coordinator, or herself to check on the status of the trails.

## 10. Executive Session

There were no issues or updates to discuss in Executive Session.

## 11. Adjournment

After noting the date of the next meeting as August 23<sup>rd</sup>, the committee voted to adjourn at 8:21 p.m. Andrea moved to adjourn, seconded by Ralph, approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Coates-Connor