

## Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: October 18, 2021

Time: 7:04 p.m.

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

### Attendees:

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

Associates: Monty Monroe, Ed Monnelly

Staff: Molly Shea, Open Space Manager, Beth O'Connor, Open Space Steward, Kristen Grubbs, Town Planner

Guests: Richard Nysten, John Harden, Will Friend, Jennifer Williams, Jack Whittier, Ethan Parsons

### 1. Citizen queries

None

### 2. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes (September 2021)

Deferred to next meeting to give everyone time to review them.

### 3. OSC Recommendation to Planning Board

A small working group put together recommendations in a draft memo. Andy summarized the recommendations:

Focus on preservation of the paddocks – most prominent features from the road. OSC recommended they be permanently protected with a CR.

Trails: ensure trail easements are situated on viable trails. A viable trail is needed on the north side. Proposed trails included in the memo.

Katie recently walked the trail near the polo field; the original trail on previous plans disappeared but the current proposed trail goes along the woods and keeps hikers out of the mud, which eliminates her concern.

Richard Nysten, counsel for ORA, commented. Richard was concerned that this memo might be a little premature because they are still in dialog with the organizations about how the property is going to be held and who will hold the CR. The intention is to have the fields open space and public. There are many moving parts to consider. ORA wants to walk us through the plans before OSC submits the memo.

John Harden, ORA's land architect, shared a map of the site and explained ORA's current thoughts on the property plans. The existing CR on the back of the property is currently not

public but will be made public. The great estate, the gardens, and the features that make the estate special must be maintained per the Bylaw. That land is a large portion of the property.

ORA sees the paddocks as off limits for development and will be preserved. Buildings need to be located in a way that has as little impact as possible on the paddocks. They are also planning around water use on the land.

ORA's proposed loop trail gets the public access to the most valuable part of the property. The portion of the trail along the polo field may be redundant to neighboring trails. They might move that trail and part of the CR down to the paddocks.

Jennifer Williams explained that ORA took the neighbors' and public's feedback into account about wanting to see details about phases 2 and 3. They updated the plans to include plans for phases 2 and 3. The new loop trail moves part of the trail off the road and onto the property.

ORA is presenting the open space plans at the October 21<sup>st</sup> Planning Board Meeting, followed by sustainability plans on November 10<sup>th</sup>. The following meeting should be dialog with the Planning Board.

Katie asked about specific plans on preserving the paddocks. John Harden showed a map and detailed how the CR may be moved from one side to the front part of the paddocks. The 100-foot buffer zone would still be around the other side of property, but it wouldn't be in a CR.

Richard Nylen shared that the zoning officer stated the current 8.8 CR acres could count towards the 40%. He argued that the rule that says 40% of their conserved land cannot include current CR land is not in the Great Estates Bylaw, but in a reference document.

Wayne stated that the most important part of the great estate is the front paddocks, and if they aren't included in the CR then they are not protected in perpetuity. If sold, a future own could develop the paddocks.

Ethan Parsons, Planning Department Director, asked the OSC to share the open space priorities so ORA can have a discussion with the Planning Board about how to achieve it. The Planning Board would appreciate the OSC's perspective on the values of the property in relation to the bylaw. Interpreting the legalese of the bylaw may not be on topic here.

Jack Whittier asked about the new plans shown tonight – do they plan to submit architectural renderings of the new structures that will be built in the future? Jack stated concerns about seeing tall buildings from the road.

John Harden answered that the three buildings won't be built until years in the future. On October 21<sup>st</sup>, they will be showing some more developed floor plans, particularly the underground parking plans, but they don't yet know what everything above ground will look like. There will be a lower level (basement – underground parking); on top of that there will be 2 three-story buildings, plus two smaller buildings.

Ethan stated that getting into the weeds tonight about all the details is a little premature. This is an ongoing conversation, and ORA is open to an ongoing dialog with the OSC.

Kristen suggested that a memo from the OSC to the Planning Board on open space priorities would be helpful for this upcoming meeting, but a formal vote and recommendation should be

left to a later date after more dialog. Kristen recommended the OSC ask the planning board to ensure that OSC will be included in future open space planning conversations.

Will Friend, resident of Waldingfield Road, asked ORA what the resistance is to put as much property as possible that can't be developed into a conservation restriction, considering much of the land can't be developed. Will is concerned about uncertainty in the future.

#### 4. OSRP Update

Andy and Beth updated the OSC on the status of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. The state requested OSC fill in some gaps. Most of the gaps are already done, and the goal for completed revisions is by December.

#### 5. Other Items Not Reasonably Anticipated

Ralph asked for an update on the new trail that will connect Bull Brook Trail with the other side of Mile Lane. There have been 2 workdays so far by the Eagle Scout and volunteers. Beth estimates that the trail is about two-thirds complete. A couple of bog bridges are likely needed on a couple of the wet spots on the trail. ECTA and Carol included the bog bridges on their maintenance plan for the upcoming year. Carol will reach out to Ralph to consult on the trail.

Ed asked about the Strategic Planning Working Group's upcoming budgets for OSC; where did the numbers come from? Wayne explained that the long-range planning committee made assumptions for the future needs they are aware of. They took the balance from the bond and amortized it over the length of their plan.

Monty asked about the plans for Kamon Farm. Beth updated that Greenbelt has a new farmer haying the fields on the southern side where there won't be public access. Because the conditions have been so wet this year, it has been a difficult year for haying so they may only be mowing them this year. They are working on public access, planning the location of the parking area and trails. There is currently no trajectory known for when it will be open to the public.

#### 6. Executive Session

The committee entered Executive Session at 8:26 p.m. on a motion from Andy to enter Executive Session and then adjourn the meeting from Executive Session, seconded by Jeff, and passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Coates-Connor