

Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes of June 20, 2024

Remote meeting at 3:30 pm.

Attending: Susan Areson, select board liaison; Nick Norman, chair; Tom Bow, Truro Conservation Trust (TCT) representative; Shari Stahl, Community Preservation Committee (CPC) representative; Barbara Carboni, Town Planner and Land Use Counsel.

Public: John Marksbury, Laura English, Karen Ruymann

Nick Norman declared a quorum and called meeting to order at 3:30 pm. Shari will record as secretary until Janice Parky logs on.

Open Meeting: the chair welcomed the public in attendance and had committee members make introductions.

Review and approve meeting minutes from 5-30-24. Unanimously approved (moved by N.Norman, seconded by T. Bow)

Update on Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Barbara Carboni reported that the Town has contracted with a vendor, and both the Town Administrator and vendor have signed the contract. The technical nature of formatting the OSRP necessitates a consultant. Barbara estimated the work should not exceed 15 to 16 hours and has issued a set of instructions to the vendor. The OSRP will be signed by the current committee members, giving recognition to outgoing committee members who worked diligently in this year's OSRP. Barbara plans to send the consulting vendor's product of the OSRP to the State Dept DCR before submitting to the Select Board for their approval. The intent of the State DCR review is to ensure the OSRP contains all required components. The OSRP will require a vote of the Open Space Committee members and their formal signatures before going to the Select Board.

Susan Areson explained that the Open Space Committee was not satisfied with the product of the original consultant and the members of the Open Space Committee reworked and edited the OSRP.

Discussion on OSC membership, charge – all

Select Board Liaison Susan Areson thanked outgoing committee member and chair Nick Norman for his years of service on the Committee and specifically for his input into the OSRP reworking. Susan Areson spoke of the need to consider a realistic future for the OSC. The committee charge (dated November 30, 2010) is outdated and needs to be revised. Since the acquisition of Poor's Hill, the town is now in a position that it will not pursue any land that is developable for (affordable and attainable) housing. The Truro Conservation Trust can pursue preserving land for environmental reasons. The Open Space Committee can pursue land acquisition if the land can not be built upon. According to Susan Areson, the town does not have an appetite for taking on any property that could be developed and this represents a tipping point for the OSC future. Consolidating or merging the OSC with the Rec Committee has been suggested by the Select Board, however the Rec Committee is not keen on this idea. The next update of the OSRP should be made in concert with the Rec Committee.

Tom Bow suggested the mission of Bike and Walkways Committee is compatible with OSC. He noted that the TCT had looked to acquire land for oyster farms but the land owner wasn't amenable.

Susan Areson said keeping a skeletal committee to pursue grants and pursue state funds by merging with another committee could retain the assignment of the two OSC committee members to the CPC and TCT. The Town views the 38 standing committees and 60 vacancies and deems that it is absolutely essential to reduce town committees. Susan said the Select Board had made a false start previously on consolidating committees, but had not consulted with individual committees, and that was her purpose today in being frank about the future charge of the OSC.

It was noted that the three members of the public attending today's meeting have expressed interest joining the OSC and have submitted applications. There are 3 vacancies on the OSC. A question was asked as to whether the select board will receive and review the pending applications, and what the timetable was for the Select Board's determination of the future of the OSC. Susan said the applications will go before the Select Board, and it will not be this summer that a wholesale review of committees is undertaken.

Nick Norman noted that cataloging town-owned land and memorializing that list in the OSC minutes is a crucial task in order to document the public occupation/town use of acquired land, citing a court case that had challenged undocumented public land. Following the completion of the OSRP, this is the next function of the OSC.

A question was directed to Susan as to whether the Town's position on not acquiring future open space was recorded in a vote, or whether it is a mind-set of the select board or Town Administrator. Susan replied it was not a policy but an expressed opinion. It was noted there is a new select board. The current Open Space Committee charge identifies criteria (1.) "Opportunities for 'greenbelt' acquisition(s) along Rte 6 and other areas of Town." Susan pointed out the charge is not workable and outdated. It was noted that voters at ATM rejected a proposed site along Route 6 for a new DPW.

Update from Truro Conservation Trust – T. Bow

Meg Royka has stepped down from the TCT board and the new members are Carl Fink, Fred Goldsmith, Hank Janowsky and Dawn Snow. TCT closed on 17 Depot Road, 6 acres of wetland and uplands at a below market purchase using CPC funding and state grants. Trails and benches will be placed on the property. TCT is waiting for probate to close on 22 Meeting House Road, 2 acres.. TCT closed on 71 North Pamet Road. The designated purpose is employee or workforce housing. Chapel Pond is at a standstill until the owners will entertain the TCT offer.

New Business

The committee recognizes with appreciation the completed terms of Janice Parky, secretary and Nick Norman, chair. Both have worked through more than one OSRP as long-standing committee members. Nick offered to attend the next OSC meeting and be available as an on-going resource as needed.

Nick Norman nominated Shari Stahl as interim chair and Tom Bow as vice-chair until new membership of the committee can meet and reorganize committee roles, seconded by Tom. Unanimous.

Schedule next meeting – July 25th at 2pm

Motion to adjourn (Stahl; seconded T.Bow) at 4:31 pm