

Open Space Committee / Minutes of February 9, 2012 Meeting

7 p.m. Peterborough Town House

Present: Alan Bannister, Ed Henault, Francie Von Mertens

Because of a lack of a quorum, December's minutes will be approved next month.

Landowner outreach

The annual letter to owners of significant natural resource land was approved. It will be sent out with map of open space in town color-coded to indicate the four new conservation easements completed in 2011. It is the best year for land conservation in town history. The landowner letter will highlight that fact.

Von Mertens said that a quick survey of land conservation in other towns indicates that Peterborough is among the most impressive for number of families conserving their land, and total acreage conserved. While other towns might have a greater percentage of conserved land (Sharon and Hancock at 41%; Dublin at 28%; Peterborough and Jaffrey at 26%), large single blocks of land such as Mt. Monadnock in Jaffrey and Dublin, the Bass Memorial Forest in Sharon, and the Briggs Preserve in Hancock often boost the percentages.

(Note: The GRANIT system of computing conservation land in the state is in the process of being updated. The above percentages come from GRANIT.)

Peterborough's 37 families that have conserved family lands by means of conservation easements is among the highest number in the state. Privately owned conservation land makes up 20% of the town.

Von Mertens reported that at a recent public hearing to seek select board approval for transferring the Walcott conservation easement to the Harris Center, select board chair, Barbara Miller, asked if the Master Plan goal of 25% conserved land has been reached, given this year's additions to conserved land in town.

In response, Von Mertens clarified that the Master Plan stated the 25% goal not as the ultimate goal but as an "immediate" goal. In answer to the question, "How much is enough?" the Master Plan cites New York City as 27% conserved, "indicating that percentages don't necessarily tell the whole story." (Quote from Master Plan p. 4-21)

The Master Plan also clarifies that a good percentage of what's considered conserved land "lack legally binding development restrictions."

That being said, the percentage of town considered conserved in 2003 was 19%. The comparative number today is 28% when updated with the 2011 easements.

Other

Outreach to potential new members of the Open Space Committee continues.

Henault said that town committee annual reports would be due in a month, and this year's main points would be discussed at the March meeting.

The next Open Space Committee meeting is March 8. Chair Henault will be away, and members are requested to let Von Mertens know their availability on March 8. If necessary, the meeting will be rescheduled.

/fvm