

Open Space Committee / Minutes of September 29, 2011 Meeting

7 p.m. Peterborough Town House

Present: Alan Bannister, Ed Henault, Debby Kaiser, Eric Thum, Francie Von Mertens

Guests: Anna Aasgaard, Ruth Holmes

August meeting minutes were approved.

Agricultural Commission

Chair Henault welcomed Anna Aasgaard and Ruth Holmes from the town's new Agricultural Commission, and gave background on the Open Space Committee's unsuccessful search for town master plan chapter models relating to ag resources.

Von Mertens explained that town funding is available to assist in conserving natural resource land, and that the system for ranking natural resource values includes agricultural resources.

Ruth Holmes said the Agricultural Commission had its first meeting the day before, and goals set include doing an inventory of ag resources—existing and potential—as well as increasing local food production.

Golf course

Henault gave background of the Monadnock Country Club and the recent public hearing to consider town purchase of the club for \$255-300,000, the amount of the club's debt. The club's by-laws stipulate that the town be offered right of first refusal. Club members have agreed the sale price would be determined by the debt, which is below market value.

OSC members shared a desire to see the club continue, but did not see a role for the Open Space Committee given the property's low scoring for natural resource value. Von Mertens said the Conservation Commission had reached a similar conclusion. As individuals, members support the club's continuance but not as a town committee.

Henault said that Budget Committee chair Gordon Kemp had mentioned at the public hearing that using the land conservation fund for the purchase would not impact the town tax rate.

It was strongly agreed that the town should be one partner in any purchase, and that other potential partners exist (neighbors, MacDowell Colony, club members and townspeople). Past OSC policy is to use the capital reserve fund to leverage other funding and never to act as the lone funder.

It was also strongly agreed that any sale by the club include a conservation easement to prevent resale for development—if indeed the town wishes to preserve the land for open space as suggested by comments at the public hearing.

Von Mertens said a conservation easement could reserve the area around the existing club house for additional building for a school or other use in the event efforts to revitalize the golf club fail.

Von Mertens will check in with David Macy at the MacDowell Colony to pass along the OSC's consensus that the town not be the sole funder. Henault will meet with Town Administrator Pam Brenner to communicate the same, along with established criteria for use of the Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the OSC is Thursday, October 13, 7 p.m. at the Town House.
/FVM