

Open Space Committee / Minutes of March 9, 2011 Meeting

7 p.m. Peterborough Town House

Present: Ed Henault, Debbie Kaiser, Eric Thum, Francie Von Mertens, Alex Walker

January and February's minutes were approved.

OSC annual report

Von Mertens will send around first draft for committee member comments.

Proposed conservation easement

Henault gave an update on the conservation easement on R002 036 000 that the OSC recommended the Conservation Commission accept. ConCom at its February meeting suggested that because of the landowner's desire to ban commercial logging the easement might more appropriately be taken by NH Audubon, The Nature Conservancy or a land trust specializing in "wildlands" easements.

Von Mertens said NH Audubon limits land protection to parcels abutting existing sanctuaries or land with exceptional habitat features. Henault will seek response from TNC and Northeast Wilderness Trust to determine likelihood of their interest in the easement. (The latter specializes in "forever wild" easements.)

It was agreed that the OSC did not itemize reasons for its recommendation that the ConCom accept the easement. Thum volunteered to attend the next ConCom meeting (March 17, 7 p.m.) to communicate those reasons more fully. Among the reasons:

That the property ranks high on OSC ranking of natural resources (abuts existing conservation land; has trails that expand the Casalis State Forest network; location in an area of town that has maintained its rural character).

That the landowners are protecting abutting open field habitat by means of a deed restriction and limiting residential development to existing footprints. (Its potential for development without an easement is considerable.) (OSC to confirm deed language that protects the field.)

That another conservation organization is unlikely to accept the easement (OSC members to confirm that). The Monadnock Conservancy did not accept the easement owing to the ban on commercial logging and future ownership by a condominium association; and lack of natural resources exemplary enough to overcome those two perceived drawbacks.

That the OSC met with ConCom easement steward Susan Stanbury and town planner Carol Ogilvie, and received their endorsement for recommending the town accepting the easement.

That Conservation Commission policy has been to accept an easement only if other land trusts are unlikely to accept it. The policy acknowledges that a property might have conservation value more visible locally than to a regional or statewide land trust.

Annual Saving Special Places workshop April 9

Henault, Thum, Kaiser and Von Mertens will attend.

ConVal Senior Class Project: Conservation Workgang April 2

ConVal and EMS are organizing seven or eight conservation-linked workgangs Saturday April 2 that will be publicized. OSC members to spread the word.

The next meeting of the Open Space Committee is **Thursday, April 14 at 7 p.m.**

/fvm