

**MINUTES
SELECT BOARD
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH**

Tuesday, June 5, 2018 – 5:00pm
1 Grove Street, Peterborough, New Hampshire

Present: Barbara Miller, Tyler Ward, Karen Hatcher

Also Present: Rodney Bartlett, Vanessa Amsbury-Bonilla, Fash Farashahi, Nicole MacStay

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Public Input Regarding Proposal to Graze Cattle on Cheney Field

Ms. Miller opened the public discussion. She reminded everyone that the Select Board serves in an advisory capacity on this issue. The Conservation Commission has the final authority on the decision. Decisions will not be made during this meeting; the purpose of the meeting being for data collection and public input.

Mr. Stan Fry explained the scope of the project. He pointed out that the area intended is not the entire forty acres shown, instead about half of the area shown, about twenty acres, bordering Old Street Road, not Cheney Ave. He is interested in horticulture and land projects, including Dublin and Peterborough in the pasturing of cows. He continued, saying he has more than enough land currently, but would like to improve the quality of this particular piece of land, since Peterborough promotes itself as a green and environmentally aware town. Prompted by the technique of rotational grazing and carbon farming, he proposes to improve the quality of the land and has had good success with his property in Dublin due to the grazing. He walked the area, noting how poor the grass quality was in this particular piece of property and recognized an opportunity to collaborate with the town and the Conservation Commission in offering this idea. His personal experience with health issues caused by magnesium deficiency prompted research about poor soil quality and how that affects the nutrient density of our foods due to industrial farming. He explained the details of how the cows would be rotated, and solar powered electric fencing installed. He would only graze mature cows. There would be no chemical applications, only biochar would be added to the grazing area. He estimated that this area of land should be able to support twenty cows, but would start with five to six and add up to ten more. There would be no equipment on the field, only a 'gator' to deliver water. He spoke to the concerns of farm smells, citing there would be little to none, electric fencing would not be painful only uncomfortable, aesthetics of the fencing, and reassured that it was unobtrusive, and multiple gates would be installed for easy access. With regard to pollinators, the grazing improves the condition for pollinators. With regard to it being a money making enterprise, he anticipates he would not recoup a profit from his investment, an anticipated expense of about fifty thousand dollars.

Ms. Francie Von Mertens explained this is an unprecedented request. She explained a small change in the request, which originally included a portion of the Wheeler Trail land, installing fencing on this parcel to provide shade for the cattle. She gave the history of the Wheeler Trail land. Because this piece of land was secured by a grant, this grant has a stipulation one cannot impede recreational access to this land, therefore the inclusion of the Wheeler Trail land is no longer a consideration. There is a possibility that the same encumbrance exists on the Cheney field, but she did not have clarity on this detail at the time of this meeting. The Conservation Commission looks at natural resources, management of the field for scenic resources as well as wildlife. Agriculture and farm resources are also traditional uses considered in management plans and the Commission will reexamine this angle. She expressed the Commission is concerned about the divisiveness imparted due to this proposal. The Forest Society is a partner in stewardship that holds a conservation easement, and any use will have to be approved. She admitted that there is much that is not known at this time, doesn't want to rush into a decision, and wants the process to be community building.

Ms. Miller said this is an emotional topic and reminded the public to keep a sense of community as neighbors and friends. She said the Select Board received twenty three letters regarding this project, from which concerns and considerations were captured and compiled to a list. Tonight more can be added to this list per public input.

Ms. Hatcher read the list of concerns and considerations. Ms. Miller invited the public to add their concerns.

Carl Staley said that if the Forest Society holds no mandate for agricultural use, then why is it being proposed. Also with regard to the degradation of soil, the Forest Society has monitored this field for over thirty years, has walked the field and said it's in compliance of 'productive farmland' and is ranked in 30th percentile for top habitat by NH Fish and Game in 2015. He claimed it has not degraded to the level that Mr. Fry suggested.

Mark Fernald said the neighborhood preserved the field from development in 1984 by the Fernalds. The intent was to keep land available for recreation. The issue is the taking of public land, to be made 'private' due to this type of use, because it restricts public use. He said what is the sense of public land if the public can't use it. He said he was concerned by the precedent this sets.

Jim Van Valkenburg asked what is the process to create the lease and terms and can this be transferable. He asked if this business entity was a non-profit or a for-profit venture.

Ashley Contravera said she lives at 60 Old Street Road, has small children, and is concerned this piece of land would no longer be kid friendly due to the cows and electric fences.

Peggy VanValkenburg said she is deeply concerned about the progression of this proposal. She announced that she put together a petition and gathered 203 signatures against the change to the field.

Ms. Von Mertens mentioned that access to the field wasn't mentioned. Mr. Fry explained the old access road off of Old Street Road that needs to be improved. This would be the access point.

Shelley Gogen Harper wanted to know how much agricultural land is in town and if conditions were such that it was needed, would there be enough. She said as a farmer, it's very difficult to make a living farming. She said she is thrilled that Mr. Fry wants to improve this land. Her concern is that the town do an inventory of the food shed, and take it in consideration when determining field usage.

Libby Rhinehart asked will everybody get a voice. She said she understood per a state statute that a lease of more than one year must go to a special town meeting and cannot be land for public use. She asked for more elaboration regarding details of the possibility of a lease and her concern that the town would hold a special town meeting to have the opportunity to vote on this issue.

Peter Campbell said if use of a license was used instead of a lease, then this would not require a vote from the town. Ms. Miller said a license is revocable. He expressed this is a concern.

Tory Harring Smith said her concern is that we privilege was is, over what could be. She would like to see how we can model civil engagement and innovative engagement and ways to explore use of public lands.

Dory Drachman said with regard to combating climate change, this proposal is similar to pasturing at Nubanusit Farm, where she lives, which promotes environmentally aware farming. Her concern is that we are ignoring climate change solutions.

Loretta Laurenitis said her question is why Mr. Fry would want this field when he has the Stone Barn and thirty acres surrounding it. Ms. Miller explained if approved, a variance would need to be passed.

Jack Ellerkamp said his concern is about financial gain by a business person on land that has been set aside for public use. Per his understanding, Mr. Fry has an intention to create an 'agrihood' from the Stone Barn development. Why is he going to this expense and trouble to use this field for five to six cattle when he has many other acres of property elsewhere for grazing. He is concerned that this is an individual benefiting from public land and restricting use to the public.

Gary Moody expressed his concern is that Mr. Fry is engaged in an experimental activity, and is concerned about property depreciation due to this proposal. He suggested a living fence instead of an electric fence as well.

Kim Graham said her concern is for those out of town learning about this trail will arrive to find a trail that is inhospitable or not as expected.

Patty Long said her concern is about the many trails that lead into the meadow; this meadow will not have the accessibility to the public for snowshoeing and other winter activities. There is not one trail that can be fenced off. There are numerous trails.

Mr. Fry spoke to the financial gain concern. He has owned the Stone Barn for years, and has restored it. He is concerned about the longevity of the barn in the future. He said Amelia approached him about the possibility of an agrihood and the owners of the barn would not be involved in that. He is not trying to make a profit. He is only selling beef to friends and family.

Sarah Steinburg Heller said her concern is about Peterborough shunning innovation, growth and change. She wants to live in a town that is open to innovation, change and growth.

Steve Lipofsky said we should listen to pros and cons and keep an open mind. He is concerned that the process be not adversarial, but judged on its merits.

Robin Holpert said he is a dairy farmer, his concern is that we internally try to find the answer to these possibilities, balancing open space and agriculture.

Glen Cob said he raises cattle. He is hoping for compromise and negotiation. He said the fence could be brought away from property lines, a field fence is better than electric fence, however in the winter, the electric fence would be removed so it would not limit access for winter activities. As for financial gain, he sees no reason to invest in this piece of land with no water source or electricity, other than it being for some benefit for the town.

Tracy Jones said her concern is about precedent. This could open up the possibility to leasing forest land to maple sugar harvesters.

Janet Altobello said this land is a meeting place for neighborhoods and children, her concern is if there are changes, that those changes are designed in such a way that offers free range play and meeting space, a kid friendly neighborhood.

Dan Holmes said this is an accurate description of possibility for Mr. Fry. Relationships are the future of agriculture. We need to include agriculture. This may not be the right place, but he would like to see the project or others like it go forward to demonstrate the potential of a relationship between agriculture and land owners.

Ms. Miller closed the public discussion.

Library Finance Committee – Memorandum of Understanding and General Update

Sue Martin representing the Library Finance Committee, said the committee is attempting to meet the liquidity requirements before starting construction of the new library. After discussions with lenders, the 1833 Society has collateral in form of pledges, and is looking for guarantors to meet requirements of the lenders. In order to meet construction date by the end of August, lending institutions require deliberation for the loan.

The next Select Board meeting is set for July 17, but the Library Finance Committee needs an agreement before that date from Administration and the Select Board. Mr. Bartlett suggested authorization to finalize negotiations to develop appropriate documents to meet these needs.

Mr. Fry commented that this is a significant issue; cash flow is required and there's a delta between what is needed and the cash flow.

Ms. Hatcher requested for background information be distributed to Select Board members and that we must not take on the bond unless the funds are raised.

Board and Committee Appointments

Chair Miller read the list of appointments and reappointments.

Motion: Mr. Ward made a motion to appoint all except Mose Olenik and Dick Estes who have resigned from the Heritage Commission.

Vote: Ms. Hatcher seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of Minutes of May 1, 2018

Motion: Mr. Ward made a motion to approve minutes of May 1, 2018.

Vote: Ms. Miller seconded.

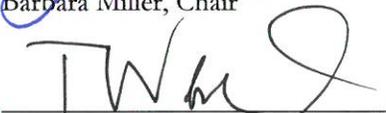
As there was no more business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Vanessa Amsbury-Bonilla, Department Assistant

PETERBOROUGH
SELECT BOARD:



Barbara Miller, Chair



Tyler Ward



Karen Hatcher