

Casco Open Space Commission Meeting Minutes – Final

Meeting Date: January 15, 2018

Call to Order: ~ 6:40 P.M.

Present: Open Space – Acting Chairman Keith Morehouse, Frank Kantor, and Eric Dibner

Current Agenda and December Minutes: Eric moved approval, Frank seconded – all approved.

Old Business:

State Park Road Sale Offer; The status of the pending purchase of a 11.5 ac. property on State Park Road by the Town of Casco was discussed after Keith advised that a purchase and sale agreement had been executed by the Town with the Grants.

Heath Property/Pine Hills Focus Area (Focus Area 1); The group discussed an offer to sell to the town, at a bargain price, land bordering on The Heath. Two Open Space Commission members met with the owner to get a sense of what would be an acceptable agreement. The Open Space Commission is enthusiastic about the prospects of beginning the process of conserving properties for Casco's open space Focus Areas by acquiring this land. Some of the COSC members have walked the property and others are planning to do so at the earliest opportunity.

Conservation Easement For Open Space Purposes; Keith reviewed the status of this effort. Conservation Easement-related materials of a variety of types and from a variety of sources have been mailed to the owner. Phone contact was made with the owners and the response was that they are still interested in the easement. The walk-around for this property still needs to be carried out.

Open Space Budget; Both Operations and Acquisition Town open space budgets were reviewed. COSC members discussed the implications of the information that came out of the meeting with The Heath landowner who wishes to sell property to the Town. On the basis of that discussion, several strategies were laid out that would meet the needs for funds covering actions that are presently at hand. There is a preliminary proposal for the request; however, a recommendation for the COSC budget will be forwarded to the Town Manager and Select Board following the COSC meeting.

Open Space Conservation Ordinance and Casco Open Space Plan; The Commission discussed briefly the Open Space Ordinance/Open Space Plan. Some draft materials will be provided to Eric, who will incorporate them into a more comprehensive draft to be discussed at the several meetings pre-Town Meeting.

Update On Timber Harvest on the ~50-acre State Park Road; It was reported that, apparently, timber harvest at this location is ongoing. The status of this activity will be checked for the next meeting.

New Business:

Protected Lands Report; Maine Land Trust Network; Eric informed the group of the availability of a report from the MLTN, dated October 27, 2017, that presents the results of analysis carried out by that group from data compiled from land trusts in Maine. Titled "Land Trusts Work For Maine," it is easily found on-line by searching on that title with the date of the report (2017). The report outlines the benefits that protected lands can provide, and dispels some of the myths concerning the notion that these benefits come at an unacceptable cost to the general public. Maine has the fewest lands in public status of all the eastern states; about 95 percent of all protected lands in Maine are taxed.

Keith volunteered to take a shot at the 2017 Annual Report, which is to be submitted later this month or the first part of February.

Public Participation: None

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned about 8:20, with unanimous approval. The next scheduled COSC meeting is February 19, 2018, at 6:30 P.M. in the Town Center meeting room.

Submitted by Keith A. Morehouse