

Casco Open Space Commission Meeting Minutes – Final

Meeting Date: September 25, 2017

Call to Order: ~ 6:37 P.M.

Present: Open Space – Chairwoman Barbara York, Eric Dibner, Thomas Peaslee and Keith Morehouse; Town Manager David Morton; Public Participants Ms. Lynne Fracassi and Mr. Michael Kelly

August Minutes: The draft was ordered changed for a spelling error and unanimously approved.

Agenda: Reviewed and re-ordered to allow public participation first, then Town Manager Q & A discussion second, and then move on to the rest of the items on the agenda. Moved by Barbara, 2nd by Tom and agreed to by all.

Public Participation: The landowner, the Commission members and the Town Manager explored the possibilities for placing a portion of the landowner's land holdings in a conservation status with the Town of Casco. There was a productive exchange of information on, for example, the wildlife, habitat and physical features of the parcel and discussion regarding what any agreement should contain with regard to reservation of rights, oversight, restrictions, tax benefits, etc. Eric moved that the Commission should consider the opportunity and get back to the landowner soon, after we've had an opportunity to walk the property. Barbara made a 2nd and the group unanimously approved.

Town Manager Q & A: The Commission and the Town Manager engaged in discussion that ranged broadly over such topics as management of town land – who should manage and who decides; Parks and Rec., the Open Space Plan and Open Space Conservation Ordinance, Select Board and Commission interactions, funding – how, how much and when, future of the Commission, Town/Select Board processes, etc. The discussion was viewed as a strategy session for finding more efficient and effective ways to conduct Commission business, as well as successful strategies for future efforts.

Old Business:

State Park Road Property; The group discussed progress of the effort to come to an agreement with a State Park Road property owner to acquire a portion of the landowner's parcel. Further exploration of the funding aspect of the item is necessary before presenting options to the Select Board.

Town of Casco ~50-Ac State Park Road Parcel; At the Select Board meeting on the 12th of September the Select Board, acting upon a recommendation by the Commission, approved timber harvest on this parcel. Although a recommendation for selection harvest on the 302 parcel (~70-acre) has been made a Select Board decision on this was deferred to a later date. Regarding the latter, access for harvest on this parcel has been established through coordination with an abutter.

Landowner Letters; One letter to a landowner offering land to the Town of Casco remains to be completed. The Commission is now trying to determine the availability of the land and related details.

Because the property is located in a Focus Area, and therefore a priority, protection under one of the available conservation strategies is highly desirable.

New Business:

The Open Space Commission finds it timely to review and update, as appropriate, the Open Space Conservation Ordinance and the Casco Open Space Plan. In this regard, it was decided that the Commission members would attempt to devote virtually all of the next regular meeting to starting the process of review, while conducting a minimum of necessary regular business.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by Barbara about 9:10 P.M.; adjournment moved by Barbara, 2nd by Eric and unanimously approved. As previously noted, the next COSC meeting is October 16, 2017, at 6:30 P.M. in the Town Center meeting room.

Submitted by Keith A. Morehouse