

Casco Open Space Commission Meeting Minutes – Final

Meeting Date: June 26, 2017 (The meeting was rescheduled from the 19th.)

Called to Order about 6:35 P.M.

Present: Open Space – Chairwoman Barbara York, Eric Dibner, Frank Kantor, Thomas Peaslee and Keith Morehouse

Minutes of the May meeting were approved unanimously, with Frank moving approval and Barbara making the second.

The Agenda was reviewed and accepted with an additional item that could be referred to as re-stated priorities for the Commission. The focus area note in New Business was also not on the agenda.

Old Business:

Tax Acquired Properties; The status of the 4-acre property off Rte. 121/Meadow Road was discussed. Although (apparently) owned by the Town, there is a dispute regarding who actually owned the land before it became tax forfeit. A new tax-forfeit property list is in processing by the Select Board. We believe keeping this area as open space would be a benefit.

State Park Road Property (50-Ac.); The parcel was discussed in terms of its management - especially noted was that sometime in the near future the Town should expect a timber harvest request/plan and forestry management plan to be submitted by interested harvesters. After the initial discussion, Eric moved and Frank seconded a motion to proceed with handling the matter as follows – first, make the Town Manager aware of our desire to have a process whereby the intended harvesting group(s) submit a plan for harvest to COSC. Then, after a short review period the harvester would meet with COSC to answer questions, and finally (barring needed changes) a recommendation would be sent to the Select Board. The decision to proceed with the harvest would be at the discretion of the Select Board. If the contract to harvest is subject to a bidding process, the harvest plan(s) would become an integral part of the application. The Commission unanimously supported the motion.

Berry Park Initiative; We were brought up-to-date by Frank and Eric regarding the status of the thinking on planning and actions to be taken/not taken for this current year. There is a concept plan but it reportedly needs more work. Frank will follow-up.

Town File; Barbara reported that a file, dedicated to open space, has been sequestered in the file room of the new Town office building. The file will be used only for those documents that the group believes essential to preserve the open space record.

Letters; The response letter-to-landowners situation was reviewed for completeness. We still have 3 letters of response for earlier inquiries to complete and a couple for ongoing issues that need to be drafted.

Town Meeting; In the context of COSC budget(s), the voting result was well received. However, we still have an additional \$60k to go in order to get back to our non-operational pre-Berry Park balance.

New Business:

Focus Areas; Planning for focus area open space was again discussed, so it is somewhat old business but the accomplishment is new. Keith brought the group up-to-date on his work on pulling together a more-or-less complete listing of properties that are either within the focus area boundary lines or those that the boundary lines intersect.

Near-term Priorities; (1) Positioning ourselves to acquire or otherwise protect lands in focus areas – tracking the status of lands in focus areas, (2) Constructing a work plan with which to guide future open space-related work, and (3) Work to ensure that the Town's best interests are represented in any timber harvest activities on Town lands, including ensuring that quality Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) are in place before harvest begins.

Public Participation: None

The meeting was adjourned by Barbara about 7:52 P.M., after a motion to adjourn by Eric and a second by Keith.

The next COSC meeting is July 17, 2017, at 6:30 P.M. in the Town Center meeting room.

Submitted by Keith A. Morehouse