

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes

Craft Room 3, Community Center

Shelton, CT

Monday, February 23, 2004

Members Present:

**Dave Zamba
Tom Harbinson
Harriet Wilber
Regis Dognin**

Members Absent:

**Ed Conklin
Ken Olin
Celeste Beattie
Neil Hayes
Paul Gabor
Ralph Rotondo
Karen McGovern**

4 members were present, which did not establish a quorum.

Dave Zamba, Co-Chairman at 7:57 P.M, called the February 23, 2004 meeting of the Open Space Committee to order. All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the January 26, 2004 were tabled due to the lack of quorum.

Treasurer's Report

Tom Harbinson presented the members with the October 2003, November 2003, and the December 2003 financial reports.

Last month Jim Pjura provided me with a copy of the Open Space Ordinance that defined how the Open Space Trust Account is funded and how expenditures from the account are reimbursed. He also provided a copy of the budget form for 2003-2004 from the Finance Dept. For instance, if there is an expenditure under \$50,000, that will be reimbursed 100%. If the expenditure is over \$50,000, the reimbursement is spread out evenly over 4 years. The Pawloski property development rights that was cut in 1999, that reimbursement was spread out over 4 years. If you add all the reimbursement amounts, you will get the \$129,076.00 that was added to the account in October 2003. What that doesn't

include is, from the Open Space Trust Account Ordinance, is an appropriation of funds that is .0075 of the growth of the Grand List. Harriet Wilber stated that it was repealed. Tom noted that the ordinance was passed in 1998. Harriet said that was when they added the 15%. They increased the goal of the City from 10 to 15% and put that away. Tom asked, so there is no budget line item other than what we get for reimbursement of expenditures? Harriet said usually they give us some money, around \$200,000. I believe it includes the reimbursement. Tom said the Mayor has presented the budget but he did not know the amount. Marianne said she would look into the ordinances. Tom stated that it also states in the ordinance that in the event of a zero or negative grand list growth that the minimum of \$20,000 will be allocated. Regis asked, in addition to that, the fee in lieu of amounts are added, when does that happen? Tom replied that happens when the payments come in. In addition to what the Finance Dept. provides I would like to have something set up to know what payments will be expected, once a subdivision is approved. The fee in lieu of right now is paid on a per lot basis. As each lot is sold, the payment is then made. Harriet said she would like to find out from Rick Schultz how it is figured. The payment for the Goodman parcel has not been reflected in the finance reports. Regis stated that it would be good to have a database set up to be able to look at a glance to see how much a parcel sold for. Tom said that the GIS software should be able to do that task. We would need to get the information from Planning & Zoning that once a subdivision is approved, what the fee in lieu of is. Regis and Tom said they would be willing to gather the information for a spreadsheet to project and track the payments. The spreadsheet would have the date approved, the date's payments are received, and the dollar per acre, and anything else that we may feel will be useful information. Dave Zamba said that since there is no quorum we couldn't approve the Treasurer's Reports or make a motion to create the subcommittee to create a database. We will have to do that at the March meeting.

Subdivisions

Blakeman Estates – 8 Birdseye Rd. Ext. The proposal is for one new house. The committee members reviewed the drawing. It appears that the parcel is subdivided with an existing house. It was not certain if it linked to any open space. Our recommendation would probably be to ask for a fee in lieu of.

Hidden Meadows Estates – This is in a R1 area, on Beardsley Rd. just past Jones' Pumpkinseed Hill farm. The number of proposed lots 28, the number applied for is 4. This appears to be the second phase of this development. Tom Harbinson would like to see master plan. It appears to be a subdivision off Beech Tree Hill Rd. The property between the farm where the City has investigated purchasing development rights on, and there was a 3-strip set-up. There was a strip of property purchased as open space and then there was a conservation easement and then there was a development buffer. There were 3 components that made up the distance between a housing structure and the

farm. Parts of that related to the cannons they use to scare off wildlife have to be a certain distance to a residence. That helped to facilitate that distance by having this makeup of 3 different strips. The master plan at that time referred to the open space and how it was to be given. There is a proposed walking path on this proposal as well. We really need to look at the master plan. Harriet Wilber mentioned that the open space he originally going to give is now part of these lots. We want to make sure there is continuity in what they proposed in the beginning of the master development and how it relates to this phase 2. The plan shows lots 12, 13, 14 and 15. It is assumed that 11 homes have already been built. This committee will look at this again next month.

550 River Rd. This committee received a letter from Alderman Jack Finn and Judson Crawford, member of the Board of A & T, in regards to the purchase by the Mayor of this property. The letter addressed the issue and wished the Open Space Committee to investigate the potential of purchasing this for open space. Tom Harbinson stated that this property is located on River Road at the bottom of Constitution Blvd. A pumping station for the sewer system is on the property and the cemetery is above the property with an access road that hooks in around it. It shows on the Assessor's map as 14.39 acres. This parcel does include an area that contains an area of metal hydroxide sludge pits. This was property owned by Emhart fasteners. I know the Conservation Commission looked at it in around 2001 and had passed on the potential acquisition of it because of the environmental contamination, which included the sludge pits. It is being discussed now that the Mayor has purchased an 11-acre parcel, which does not include a 3-acre parcel that has the sludge pits. That could be investigated as to the subdivision of the property, when it occurred, we had an opportunity to make comment at the subdivision of the property when it went from the 14 acres into an 11-acre parcel and a 3-acre parcel. We had looked at it as a 14-acre parcel in the past and passed on it. Harriet Wilber asked if Conservation knew the price at the time and Tom Harbinson replied, no, we didn't. I don't think it even entered in at that point. Tom said it came about because I personally was looking into purchasing some waterfront property and shied away from it due to the environmental contamination. I then referred it to Conservation. I did not know the price and did not approach them about the price. Harriet stated that she was sorry that they did not check into the price because for that price, even with the contamination, it may have been worth looking into. Tom Harbinson said that Fairfield University's crew team that has a facility at Murphy's boat yard, had conversations with Andre Albert, who is their recreation director, was looking into a permanent location for their crew operation. I mentioned the property to him and also mentioned the environmental contamination. They never followed through. It has been on the market openly for at least 2 years. Harriet said that she remembers Conservation was approached in purchasing the small parcel next to it, and at the time the price was about \$300,000, and I know we mentioned it to John Anglace, who said they were not interested at that price. I think we may have mentioned it to the Mayor as well. This parcel was 1.75 acres. If it were linked to South Bank it would be different. South Bank has to its

north Sal Matto's property and cuts off any linkage to any other property. South of South Bank it becomes water right up to Route 110 property line. Maybe someone could look at some public access for a canoe launch or wildlife lookout boardwalk, or something like that. That will have to be addressed in the coastal area management plan because it is in 100-year flood plain. That is something the DEP will look at, just as they looked at the driving range by the landfill. They had to prepare a coastal area management plan and provide a conservation or pedestrian access easement down to the waterfront for fisherman. Getting back to the 11-acre purchase, Dave Zamba said that it needs to be looked at how the 3-acres were subdivided from lot 55 on map 53, which was 14.39 acres. There might have been an opportunity at that subdivision point to make some comment.

Birmingham Development – known as the Botti building on Bridge St. There is 3 parcels involved. One is the Botti building, and along Canal St. there are two parcels where they will be constructing a parking garage. There is an operating canal that still services Chromium Process. Regis Dognin said that the City through the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) was considering reopening that and we were disappointed that the parking garage may cover it. The parking garage is two levels. There is no subdivision of the property. Keep in mind the river walk. Tom Harbinson stated that there have been conceptual renderings showing it coming along the waterfront of all the properties. It would have to be cantilevered out. There is also a possibility of a road going around the back of Spongex. The reason people find the river walk and the slab so attractive is its long vista. If that river walk would come back into the core of the downtown so that people could access the businesses, as it conceptually will continue down to Indian Well, I think the use of the canal water, having it opened all the way and having the river walk along the canal on this section would be more attractive than seeing it on the river and cantilevered out over the back of the industrial buildings. I think it could bring the people into the core of the town and connect the downtown by the Pierpont to potential residential areas. It's just, where does the parking go? From a planning standpoint it would be more attractive to see the river walk come down along the canal. Regis stated that the asphalt plant is really incompatible with everything we are planning for downtown. Dave Zamba said that has been a hot bug of the CAB for years. Tom said that there is a problem in being able to build a new asphalt plant with the moratorium, which seems ridiculous because of all the new technology you would think it would be cleaner than the old asphalt plants. Dave Zamba asked, do you really think the Birmingham development group is really going to sink all this money into this renovation? Probably not. Tom said, with this proposal I would prefer to see the canal open. Regis asked, are there any open space issues? Tom said there is nothing being subdivided. Regis said that the issue comes down to connectivity with open space, including the slab. Dave Zamba asked who owned the canal and Tom answered that the property owners along the canal owned it. Chromium Process still uses it and Jim Ryan would probably be the one to ask regarding ownership. Getting back to the open space aspect, since it is not being subdivided there may be nothing to say from this committee. As far as the

environment regarding the canal, the Conservation Commission would be involved. Regis said that it still affects open space as far as the connectivity part regarding the walkway and where it goes. Dave Zamba said we would table it until March and then make a recommendation from an open space standpoint regarding the parking lot and the proposed walkways.

Harriet Wilber asked if anyone has tried to move the asphalt plant. Dave Zamba stated that the CAB has talked to the Mayor several times. He had talked with the parent company, Tilcon, and had some talks with the owner of the plant, and also at the January BOA meeting the asphalt plant had come up as well. The Mayor had intimated at that time that we always had said that this is something we need to deal with and maybe now is the time to deal with it.

Executive Session – Land Purchases

Without a quorum there is not the ability to make the motion to go into Executive Session.

Trails Report – Tom Harbinson

The Eagle Scouts are waiting for warmer weather to move ahead on their projects. Jim Pjura got the quotes for the iron gates along the power line corridor along Route 108 for the open space. Terry Gallagher had put together a grant application under the same program where we were awarded funds for our other timber bridge to do one at Silent Waters. This bridge will have railings on the perimeters for safety. We had a trails walk on the Well Spring development on Old Stratford. There is a “barn”, but upon examination it is nothing more than a 3-bay garage. That barn needs to go and Jim Swift, the engineer for the development, asked if we wanted it. We saw no value in keeping it, historically speaking. It doesn't meet any needs for the Trails Committee. The open space is nice and we were shown where the trail location is along the river. Wetlands had a lot of questions due to the close proximity to the Far Mill River. Jim Swift showed us how they addressed all the wetland concerns. The trail is short but provides access for fishermen. There is a pull off area and there is a driveway with a stonewall and steps leading down to a meadow. On that meadow is a corncrib structure. It is approximately 8'x12' structure and the historic society should be informed about it to see if they have any interest in it. It could be moved to the Historic Center if wanted. The open space goes along where the old bridge crossed the Far Mill River and by the mill. The bridge abutments are still there. We also went up to the Wabuda property to see where the open space area and the trail is flagged.

Round Table

Regis Dognin presented the committee with revised plans on the Constitution Park. He stated that they were ready to go out to bid in February but just before that, people looked at the drawings and did not think it looked right. It looked too formal and too close to Constitution Blvd. The drawings showed a semi-circle with pavers and a flag at the top of a half-moon. We re-worked it and came up

with a new design. Regis showed the first version of the changes. Jim Tate has another version, which shows a linkage between here (shown) and the corner of Steep brook Lane, which is a subdivision with 47 houses. That development has sidewalks, the only one in Shelton in the last 25 years. There is supposed to be a crossing with a sidewalk with a DOT button to push to be able to cross the street at Constitution Blvd. There is a sidewalk up Long Hill Ave. It has been redesigned with an asphalt walk instead of pavers, which allowed him to go an extra distance has and created a circular area around the berm. He has added 5 off-street parking spaces. The flagpole has moved only a few feet. It is a really nice protected area to sit. The vista looking south is nice. We will have benches but they may not be ready when it is first opened. The pavers will be used around the flagpole. They will also use lanterns. Regis detailed where all the plantings will be. It will go out to bid on Friday and we are still sticking to the opening of the park on Memorial Day. Harriet asked about the memorial trees that were planted. Regis said that the memorial, or millennium, trees died. Harriet asked if they were guaranteed and Regis said no, because they were purchased out of state and this was the case where they were not the type of planting material acclimated to this area. They bought them because it was a good deal.

Tom Harbinson stated that there is an 8-24 referral from P & Z to the BOA for acquisition of the property off John Dominick Drive. That is the Pagliaro parcel that is landlocked in the Shelton Lakes area. Tom also stated that he is on the advisory committee for the update to the plan of conservation and development. It will be a big job. The way the committee got together is, P & Z recommended two people, the BOA recommended two people, economic development recommended one and the Mayor recommended one or two. We will be looking at everything with the open space plan being part of it. We met for the first time tonight and we were given the grand list from 1990 to 1993. In the late 1980's our grand list was 73% residential and 27% commercial or industrial. You have to have a certain balance of commercial and industrial base to put your taxes against to pay for all the services that are demanded from residential. That 27% has now dropped to 22%. Similar to our claims for when we want to purchase open space, once it is developed from raw land to developed land, it is gone forever. Similarly with new applications coming forward with residential towers or apartment complexes on commercial land, once that capacity is removed from the commercial base, it never comes back. Residential has taken a larger percentage of the tax base, keeping in mind the type of houses being now are larger value houses and the pre-existing houses have also increased. In our plan of development is how we create our base to keep up pace for the demand for revenue to pay for all the services. We will be hiring an outside consultant plus help from Rick Shultz and Tony Panico to pull some things together that are already in house. We will be asking for an appropriation from the BOA to take us through June. We are talking about \$150,000-\$175,000 and probably about a year and a half undertaking. It will be intense.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya
Clerk, Open Space Committee

*A tape is on file at the Town Clerk's office.