

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes

Craft Room 3, Community Center

Shelton, CT

Monday, May 24, 2004

Members Present:

**Dave Zamba
Tom Harbinson
Celeste Beattie
Regis Dognin**

Members Absent:

**Ed Conklin
Ken Olin
Paul Gabor
Ralph Rotondo
Harriet Wilber
Neil Hayes**

Dave Zamba, Co-Chairman at 7:50 P.M, called the May 24, 2004 meeting of the Open Space Committee to order. All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Tom Harbinson noted that since this committee has an unfilled vacancy from Planning & Zoning, with Karen McGovern's appointment ending in December, that we have 7 active members. Of that 7, we have 4 present, which activates a quorum.

Review of Minutes

Celeste Beattie made a motion to accept the March 22, 2004 minutes. Regis Dognin seconded the motion. All were in favor, motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Tom Harbinson presented the March, 04 Open Space Trust Account to the Committee. We are missing the February report but the Finance Dept. will e-mail the reports to Tom. Opening balance is \$434,659.89 with a deposit from Turtle Rock Estates in the amount of \$7,000. Interest for November, December, January, and February was added. There was a deduction of \$3,000.00 for an appraisal for the Goodman property on Howe Ave. and another one on Constitution Blvd. There was also a Title Insurance premium deduction of

\$505.00. There was a payment for the Chase Land purchase (Constitution Blvd. South and Lot 12, Howe Ave.) in the amount of \$130,000.00. The other deductions were for secretarial services and one to Withers, Bergman Trustee in the amount of \$10,000. 00, which may be the Goodman parcel. The date shows as 3/4/03 – it may be a typo error or a deletion from last year’s report. Tom will investigate. The balance is \$298,784.60. Tom stated he would like to wait until receiving February’s report before accepting this one.

Correspondence

Dave Zamba stated we received a letter dated April 18, 2004 to the Mayor in which we were copied on. It reads as follows: *On behalf of the residents of the subdivision Laurel Ledge and surrounding streets of Middle, Forest and Birch, we would like to bring to your attention the importance of leaving the land of lots 95 and 96, on map 92, coordinates, undisturbed. We would also like to be informed of any transactions that occurred and will occur pertaining to the construction or use of the previous mentioned lots. In our discord with the development of this land please allow us to express our deep concern of the following: to begin the area in question borders a brook on its west and retaining pond on its north. The only access way available is Middle Ave. and an enormous ledge of rock 40’ above the plain of these rocks. Parallel to this ledge of rock runs the brook which is necessary to cross the arriving at the property. Our concern for leaving these wetlands undisturbed is great. The wildlife found on this land depends on the brook for its survival. Any changes made would severely jeopardize this ecosystem. Disruption of these and any part of the space would leave to the demise of white squirrel, skunk, various birds, owls, white tailed deer, and of course the many aged oak and laurel trees including subsequent wetlands throughout the area which flows into the Housatonic River. We urge you and your counterparts to view this area. It is designated as wetlands and we feel it should remain as such, providing necessary functions. Please let this letter serve as notice that we wish to be informed via certified mail of any and all meetings, proposals of the above mentioned property by the various committees as follows: Wetlands, Planning & Zoning, Board of Alderman, Open Space. Questions and concerns can be addressed to the address below. Thank you for your time and interest on this matter.*

The committee members discussed where the property is. Celeste Beattie asked if this was the property that is being built on. It was thought perhaps it was the Cappiello development.

Subdivisions

The Vistas at White Hills – This is the Wabuda property off of East Village Rd. This is the property that we recommended the City acquire and as far as we know, there is no action in that regard. Toll Brothers is the applicant. The property borders French’s Farm and the Land Trust property. Total acreage is 81.03. The map we are reviewing is dated 1/26/04. There may be an update to

this one. We are looking at 37 lots. The open space dedication is 10.34 acres, of which 8.67 is qualified open space. They are showing the open space abutting French's Hill, (6.08 acres) 5.73 acres (qualified), at the entrance to this subdivision off of East Village Rd. on a road labeled Sachem Dr. There is a small open space piece that connects to French's Farm onto Sachem Dr. near lot 29 and 31, of .35 acres. That allows use of a corridor for a trail on an open space parcel across Sachem coming down to the Land Trust property. That is a total acreage of 3.91. The acreage numbers on the drawing don't seem to add up to the open space notations. At one time we asked for Conservation easements next to French's Farm. This has some old pent ways with stonewalls on either side, around lot 10 and lot 13, that will be obliterated. There are a lot of stonewalls that could be moved to serve as a border to the open space. Tom seemed to recall that lots 14, 15 & 16 were larger and had conservation easements at the rear of the lots. The open space corridor is supposed to help with the trail. Narrow corridors don't seem to be respected by the property owners unless they are well defined. They discussed signs and the fact that they get torn down. You need to have some sort of landmark, such as walls, vegetation buffer or monument noting that you are no longer on the open space for a hiker or to the property owner, that you are no longer on your property and that you can't encroach on it. The question for us is, they are giving enough open space, is it in the areas that we want it to be? Pretty much. It is a good thing that it does about French's Farm. Tom noted that since the power lines are there and if there is a need to put a cell tower up, the easements don't allow for it unless you have permission or additional easement of the property owner, which would be the City. At that time we could benefit by rent payments for the cell tower.

Tom Harbinson made a motion regarding the Vistas at White Hills, referring to the maps of January 26, 2004, we find that the open space shown on the maps meets the minimum requirement of acreage. To preserve the properties as open space as they abut building lots that, to the extent possible, relocate existing stonewalls into boundaries between publicly owned open space and privately owned building lots. All open space should be marked and pinned before the subdivision map is filed. Regis Dognin seconded the motion. All were in favor, motion passed.

The Woods at Lake Road – This is an existing PDD at Lake Road, which is near Nells Rock Rd, and the new intermediate school. It is the previously approved Alzheimer facility that Hewitt was going to build, but is no longer going to pursue that avenue of health care. This developer, Key Development, has an option to purchase the property. They are looking to change the definition of that approved PDD and existing PDD and also expand the location where that PDD encompasses. The development map is dated February 23, 2004. The property has two parcels denoted as East Wood and West Wood. East Wood consists of 15 lots off of a new road called East Greyrock Lane. The open space is reserved as community open space. We assume there will be a conservation easement on the community open space. The total acreage of the community open space

is 5.45 acres. No publicly owned open space. West Wood consists of 25 lots off of a new road called West Greyrock Lane. The reserved community open space is 14.13 acres, which primarily wraps around Shelton Ave. There is a thin strip at the back of the property, butting up against the property owned by Frank & John Bures. They are conveying a strip for right of way purposes to the City, which is not going to be for open space, but for the future Constitution Blvd. extension. This is a PDD, which means they are not required to give open space. They are preserving and reserving land in an open space character, but not public open space. Regis thought that when they made a presentation to WPCA that they stated they had both public and community open space. Tom also felt that there is public open space as well as the community open space. Tom then just realized that the respond date from the committees was May 7. Since this committee didn't meet in April, due to lack of quorum, it is now past the deadline. It was debated whether they need to make a recommendation especially since it is a PDD and we can't get a fee in lieu of.

Tom Harbinson made a motion to write a letter in regards to the Woods at Lake Road, this is an existing PDD that is being modified into West Greyrock/East Greyrock Lane, and that there is a map dated February 23, 2004, which shows no dedication of public open space. We recognize that a PDD does not require open space or fee in lieu of; however, the underlying development is in similar nature to a PRD/CRD residential subdivision. We ask that the reserved community space have some sort of pedestrian easement, so that if a trail network is created to allow these residents to access the recreation path and Shelton Lakes greenway, that likewise, the residents can access the East Greyrock and Lake Road infrastructure to the trails network. Celeste Beattie seconded the motion. All were in favor, motion passed.

Tom noted that his idea is that while the residents here might want to have control of the open space and not have just anyone walking on a trail that they create, you have other people on Lake Rd. that this now creates a possible access to the greenway corridor.

Land Purchases – Executive Session

Tom Harbinson made a motion to go into Executive Session for the purposes of discussing land purchases and invite the clerk, Marianne, into the session. Regis Dognin seconded the motion. All were in favor, motion passed at 8:30 P.M.

At 8:45 Tom Harbinson made a motion to return to regular session. Celeste Beattie seconded the motion. All were in favor, motion passed.

Trails Report

Tom stated that as you may remember I have turned everything over to Bill Dyer. There was a work party on Saturday. They dispersed the stone millings around the recreation path and also cleared brush between Meadow St. and the timber

bridge around Pine Lake. The Eagle Scout project on Mill St. is complete. The sign kiosk was completed for the opening of fishing season. There was also a bench placed by the river as part of the Eagle Scout project. The second timber bridge is still in process. This is the one that will be crossing Means Brook in Huntington Center. It is out of the Trails Committee's hands. They have the permit from Inland Wetlands and it may still be in the process of getting an easement. Trails Day is the first Saturday in June. There will be a "dam walk", the appropriate name since it will go from one dam to another. Where the second timber bridge was going to be, we have put together a grant application and that is in to DEP. That bridge is going to have safety railings installed because of the fact that it is on top of the dam spillway.

Round Table

Celeste asked Regis how the Constitution Park is progressing. Regis stated that the flagpole went up on Friday with his help. Ed Hellauer had a machine that was used for the installation. We don't have the flag yet plus the lights are not installed. The improvements around the flagpole also have not been done, but at least the work has been started. The dedication is now going to be scheduled for Flag Day.

Regis asked that a few years back there was talk of developing an open space logo. The idea was to have uniform signage on open space parcels. There was a sign on Southbank that was done by the boy scouts and it has since deteriorated. We ought to develop a standard sign, similar to what Westport has. It is very simple, made out of materials that will last. Tom stated that we have the sign kiosks at trailheads. That is important to notify people what they can and can't do, what the hours are, and what to look for environmentally. Southbank would be a good location for a sign kiosk. Regis stated it does need a replacement sign but not like the one that was there because the material does not hold up and was hard to read. Celeste suggested they contact Inland Wetlands to see what they are using. Tom said he has signs in his garage. Those signs were for use of notifying that there is open space. Tom said that if we do something about a sign at Southbank then the gate needs to be upgraded. Dave said he would bring this up at the Parks & Rec. meeting. Tom said he would give us the update on the Plan Advisory Committee he is on. We are meeting frequently. We have chosen a company called Plan & Metrics to doing a plan of development in a way that we have not done in the past. There are two ways to develop a plan, one is called strategic and the other is visionary. In a strategic method, you look at regulations, tax revenue generation, infrastructure, etc. The other is the visionary method where you get the community involved in an early stage. As an example at a public gathering, with a map of the City on the wall and you are given red stickers to indicate areas you feel you are not proud of in the City and green stickers for the areas you are proud of and a black sticker for where you live. So this gives a visual representation of where you are, what you like and don't like, and how they feel of the town as a whole. There are other examples Tom gave. This gives a unique feedback of how the public feels.

This is a costly procedure. The estimate is \$150,000. In 1992, it cost \$125,000; so it really isn't out of line. It is a new plan. They are not going to simply update the old plan. We have had presentations from various individuals and departments. We had a long discussion today about PDD and how they work. It was a very interesting discussion. This plan will help us maintain and grow our tax base by making better use of our assets, which is our land. Several examples were given of some of the variables used.

Marianne mentioned that she e-mailed Tom, Ed and Dave regarding the Open Space Ordinance that may need to be revised concerning the way the open space trust account is paid on a yearly basis. The most current ordinance states that the account is to be paid a certain percentage based on the growth of the Grand List. Sharon Scanlon in Finance indicated that it is not paid by the method indicated in the most current ordinance. A memo should be sent to John Anglace to advise him of this and for him to see if there is a need to revise the ordinance. The members agreed to send the memo to John Anglace and the Board of Aldermen.

Adjournment

Tom Harbinson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Dave Zamba. All were in favor, meeting adjourned at 9:17 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya
Clerk, Open Space Committee

A tape is on file in the Town Clerk's office