

NEWINGTON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Special Meeting

January 14, 2016

Mayor Roy Zartarian called the special meeting of the Newington Open Space Committee to order at 6:40 p.m. in Room L101 in the Newington Town Hall, 131 Cedar Street, Newington, CT.

I. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present

Commissioner Carol Anest
Commissioner Gail Budrejko
Commissioner Bernadette Conway
Commissioner Sharon Dunning
Commissioner Carol Wojtowicz

Town Staff Present

Craig Minor, Town Planner

RECEIVED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
2016 FEB -2 AM 9:06
M. Taylor
TOWN CLERK

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A. Chairman

Acting Chairman Zartarian called for nominations for chairman. Commissioner Carol Anest nominated Bernadette Conway, seconded by Commissioner Carol Wojtowicz. There were no other nominations. Acting Chairman Zartarian called for a vote: all in favor. Acting Chairman Zartarian yielded the gavel to Chairman Conway.

B. Vice Chairman

Chairman Conway called for nominations for vice chairman. Commissioner Anest nominated Carol Wojtowicz, seconded by Commissioner Sharon Dunning. There were no other nominations. Chairman Conway called for a vote: all in favor.

C. Secretary

Chairman Conway called for nominations for secretary. Commissioner Wojtowicz nominated Sharon Dunning, seconded by Commissioner Anest. There were no other nominations. Chairman Conway called for a vote: all in favor.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion of Duties and Opportunities

The Committee reviewed the Town Council resolution of September 8, 2015 that established the "new" Open Space Committee, and the minutes from the final meeting of the "old" Open Space Committee of June 19, 2015. A discussion ensued about the role of the Committee and its relationship to the Town Council. Commissioner Anest noted that Item #3 in the resolution reads as follows:

"Upon request from the Town Council, the Open Space Committee shall make recommendations to the Town Council as to Open Space implications on such issues as the acquisition of real property, the sale of Town property, the protection and utilization of

existing Town-owned property, the financial impact of property acquisition with or without external funding sources and potential use of the Capital Improvement Fund.”

Commissioner Budrejko questioned what ability this gives the Commission to be pro-active and to set its own goals. Commissioner Dunning concurred. Commissioner Budrejko suggested the Committee go back to the Town Council and ask to have Item #3 revised. Commissioner Dunning asked what the process is to make a report to the Town Council. Commissioner Anest said that there is an “agenda setting” meeting prior to every Town Council meeting, and that she can bring it up then.

The Committee then discussed each of the five Items in the resolution. Commissioner Anest agreed with the suggestion that the Committee ask the Town Council to revise Item #3. Commissioner Budrejko noted that the last time the Open Space Committee was active there was a burning issue that the Committee was dealing with. That isn't the case today. Commissioner Budrejko asked Town Planner Craig Minor to summarize the activities of the previous Open Space Committee for the next meeting.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Conway invited members of the public to speak.

David Goodale, Executive Director of the Deming-Young Farm Foundation introduced himself. He gave a brief description of the Deming-Young Farm, and described some recent events, such as the disassembled old house from New Britain that had been stored in the barn for years. There are several old wooden sleighs there too, and an old milk wagon. He offered to come to a future meeting with more information about the farm. He expressed surprise that the Town Council has never asked him to come before them with status reports, since the Town owns the farm. He said that the duties of the Deming-Young Farm Foundation are nebulous. For example, an Eagle Scout candidate wanted to do a project on the farm several years ago, but it was unclear whose permission was needed.

Commissioner Budrejko asked if the farm is “protected open space”. Town Planner Craig Minor replied that the terms of the DEEP grant that was used to buy the farm has some very specific requirements to preserve it. He offered to bring a copy of the terms to the next meeting. Commissioner Budrejko asked Mr. Minor if there is an inventory of Newington open space. Mr. Minor said yes, but that the definition of “open space” varies depending on who is doing the talking. He offered to have the IT department prepare a new one.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive had several comments. (1) She wondered if there were conditions imposed on the Deming-Young Farm. Mr. Minor answered yes, and that these conditions are in the DEEP grant agreement that he referred to above. (2) The Town should come up with a new, better name for the “Marcap Parcel”. (3) Handouts on agenda topics would be beneficial, at future meetings. (4) The clarification of the Open Space Committees duties and responsibilities would be good.

V. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mayor Zartarian and Chairman Conway briefed the Committee on “Project Green Space”. This is an effort to get a bill passed that would give towns the option of charging an additional 1% conveyance tax on houses with a sale price of over \$150,000. The Town would use these funds to purchase open space. Several handouts were distributed. Commissioner Anest suggested David Radcliffe of Audubon CT be asked to attend a future Town Council meeting and tell the Council about the Project Green Space. Mayor Zartarian offered to do that.

Commissioner Budrejko asked Mayor Zartarian if there is any news regarding the property on Cedar Mountain that had been the subject of the Toll Brothers subdivision. He replied that there is nothing he can discuss publicly at this time.

Mayor Zartarian said that Newington needs a town-wide open space management strategy, similar to other towns. It would spell out exactly what activities are allowed on the various Town-owned open space parcels (such as the old town road on Cedar Mountain behind the CT Humane Society), and deal with issues like invasive plants. Commissioner Budrejko asked what the status was of the old Cedarcrest Hospital on Russell Road. Town Planner Craig Minor said that the property is for sale but that no one wants it due to the hazardous material (asbestos, lead paint, PCB's, etc.). He will have more information at the next meeting.

Commissioner Wojtowicz suggested the Committee reach out to other town organizations to organize some clean up events. Commissioner Anest suggested the Environmental Quality Commission.

Commissioner Anest suggested contacting the Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy, and the Sierra Club for help with deciding future projects for the Committee. Town Planner Craig Minor suggested also talking to other municipal Open Space Committees. When he was the Town Planner in Cromwell he was the staff to the Conservation Commission (Cromwell's Open Space Committee) and they were very active on farmland preservation, open space corridor planning, etc. It was suggested that Committee members attend a future meeting of the Cromwell Conservation Commission.

Commissioner Budrejko asked if there are any privately-owned open space parcels in Newington that are at risk for development, and how does Newington compare to other towns in terms of town-owned open space? Town Planner Craig Minor said he would find out.

Commissioner Budrejko suggested the Committee have a booth at the next Extravaganza. Mayor Zartarian said this is being considered, jointly with other land use boards.

Commissioner Budrejko asked Town Planner Craig Minor if there are any open space grant opportunities. Mr. Minor replied that there is the STEAP Program, and DEEP's Open Space and Watershed Land Protection Program which funded Newington's purchase of the Marcap parcel and the Deming-Young Farm. He said would do some research into that.

VI. SETTING OF 2016 MEETING DATES

It was agreed that the Open Space Committee would meet at 6:30 on the second Thursday of every month, in Room L-101.

VII. ADJOURN

Commissioner Wojtowicz moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Dunning. The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Craig Minor
Acting Recording Secretary