

NEWINGTON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2016

Chairman Bernadette Conway called the regular meeting of the Newington Open Space Committee to order at 6:30 p.m. in Room L-101 in the Newington Town Hall, 131 Cedar Street, Newington, CT.

Commissioners Present:

Chairman Bernadette Conway
Commissioner Carol Anest
Commissioner Gail Budrejko

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Sharon Dunning
Commissioner Carol Wojtowicz

Town Staff Present:

Craig Minor, Town Planner

I. ROLL CALL

The presence of the above members was noted.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Conway requested that an update on the TPZ's "Open Space Zone" project be added to the agenda under "New Business". Commissioner Budrejko made that motion, seconded by Commissioner Anest; all were in favor. The agenda was then approved as amended.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 12, 2016:

Commissioner Budrejko made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Chairman Conway. All were in favor except Commissioner Anest (abstained).

V. NEW BUSINESS**A. Status of TPZ Open Space Zone:**

Town Planner Craig Minor gave a summary of the “Open Space Zone” that the Town Plan and Zoning Commission is currently working on. He reminded the Open Space Committee that the definition of “open space” that TPZ uses will probably be different from the Open Space Committee’s definition, because the context is different. He also reminded the Committee that since the Town is not required to comply with the zoning regulations, changing the zone of Mill Pond Park, the Deming-Young Farm, Indian Hill Country Club, etc. would not prevent future Town Councils from developing those parcels, but if these parcels were ever sold, it would prevent any future owner from doing so. It might also give pause to future Town Councils who might otherwise consider developing such parcels.

B. Possible “Connecticut Greenway” Nominations:

The Town Planner stated that since nominations will probably be invited again next spring, this is the perfect time to start working on one or more applications. The Committee agreed that the Marcap Parcel and the area of the proposed I-291 beltway would be good candidates. Commissioner Anest added that the POCD recommends it. Carol Anest made a motion to direct the Town Planner to prepare a draft nomination for the two areas, seconded by Gail Budrejko. All were in favor.

Chairman Conway stated that the property known as the “Marcap Parcel” really needs a better name, since the Marcap company no longer owns it. She spoke to a Town Councilman about it recently, and was told that the process for naming Town-owned property starts with the request going to the Mayor, who forwards it to the Town Council for consideration, and if the Council feels the idea has merit, the Council will then forward it to a Town Council subcommittee for further review and recommendation. Commissioner Anest said that this might be deemed premature by the Council, since the Town is in the process of acquiring the abutting “Towle Brothers” parcel.

C. Extravaganza Booth:

Chairman Conway reported that a booth has been reserved for the Committee’s use. Several items were discussed to have in the booth: a large map of open space parcels and open space corridors in town; copies of the Parks and Recreation Department’s hiking trails brochure; hand-made posters with information on the benefits of open space wildlife, climate change, etc.

Chairman Conway said that she has been thinking of starting a “letterboxing” activity, which is an old tradition where people go around the countryside following clues to find a hidden weatherproof “letterbox” (<http://www.letterboxing.org/>). Inside the box is a unique stamp and ink pad. The finder stamps their “passport” with that stamp to indicate

that they have found that particular letterbox, and stamp the passport in the letterbox to show that they were there. The Town Planner suggested that if this is to be an “official” Open Space Committee activity, we should let Parks and Recreation Director William DeMaio know, or the Town Manager if we want to put letterboxes on other Town-owned open space such as the Marcap Parcel. Commissioner Budrejko made a motion to start a “letterboxing” activity, seconded by Commissioner Anest. All were in favor.

D. Definition of “Open Space”:

The Committee members reviewed various definitions of “open space” used by other organizations. Chairman Conway suggested the members review these on their own, make note of elements that seem appropriate for Newington, and then resume discussing it next month.

E. Open Space Inventory and Map:

It was agreed the Committee would wait until it has an agreed-upon definition of “open space” before it spends any more time developing a list of open space parcels.

F. Status of Open Space Management Strategy:

The Committee agreed to do a site walk of the Marcap Parcel and Deming Farm if time allows next month, in lieu of the normal meeting. The meeting would start at 5 pm. Commissioners and interested members of the public will gather at the western end of Old Highway on Mountain Road, just north of the East Cedar Street overpass.

G. State of Connecticut Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy

The Town Planner briefed the Committee on this. The State of Connecticut has a multi-year “Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Strategy” document known as “The Green Plan”, which was recently updated. A copy of the draft update was presented to the Committee.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Michael Fox: Are there any plans to provide parking for people who want to walk the Marcap parcel? The Town Planner replied “yes”, there is a proposal to put some on-street parking spaces in the vicinity of the East Cedar Street overpass. Chairman Conway asked the Town Planner to please make this a higher priority. The possibility of an informational kiosk of some sort at this location was discussed. Mr. Fox also asked where exactly the eastern end of Old Highway is. He knows it is near the Humane Society property on Russell Road, but it’s not clear. The Town Planner said this could be delineated in the field if the Town wants to. He will look into it.

Deborah Krawiec: She congratulated the Committee on its good work. Regarding the definition of “open space”, she felt size should not be a factor.

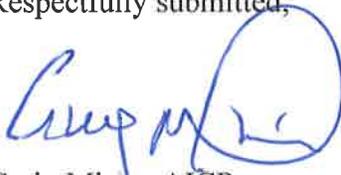
VI. COMMITTEE MEMBERS COMMENTS

Chairman Conway said that she was really looking forward to the Extravaganza. It will be an excellent opportunity for the Committee to do some community outreach.

VII. ADJOURN

Commissioner Anest moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Budrejko. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Craig Minor, AICP
Recording Secretary