

Town of Colchester
Open Space Advisory Committee
Monday, January 8, 2018
Colchester Town Hall 6:00 PM
Regular Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Chairman William Hochholzer, Linda Grzeika, Mary Stevens, and Town Staff Jay Gigliotti

Members Absent: Vice-Chairman Ted Fuini, Nick Norton and B.O.S. Liaison Rosemary Coyle

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chairman William Hochholzer called the 1/8/18 OSAC Meeting to order at 6:00pm
2. **Citizens Comments:** None
3. **Approval of the December 11, 2017 Regular Meeting Minutes:**

Linda Grzeika motioned to approve the 12/11/17 meeting minutes as written. Seconded by Mary Stevens. All Members voted in favor. Motion Carried

4. **Open Space:**

Environmental Trash Clean-up Article:

Jay Gigliotti explained that at the last OSAC meeting in December, the committee discussed the idea of promoting a recently completed trash clean-up day as a team building opportunity for groups looking to do so. In September 2017, the Town participated in the "Source to Sea" clean-up event in which the Salmon River Watershed Partnership coordinated volunteers from CME Associates, to pick up trash along the banks of the Jeremy River, at the Route 149 commuter parking lot. The volunteers spent the majority of a Saturday, separating and bagging trash left at the commuter lot or down by the river. Over 1,000 pieces of trash were picked up and disposed of as a result of this event. In reporting the success of the event to the SRWP & the OSAC, it became a clear consensus in both groups, was this activity was not only a success, but also a great way team build. The next thought was how we could replicate this event to achieve clean-up of other areas in town or the watershed. One of the ways discussed at the December OSAC meeting was to run an article in the Rivereast, explaining the clean-up and why it is beneficial.

Jay Gigliotti explained that he had drafted an article and received approval from the SRWP at their regular meeting in December. Jay Gigliotti read the article which he had wrote to the OSAC. He concluded by saying before releasing the article into the newspaper that he would first circulate it among the SRWP members. The OSAC members had a few corrections/ additions on the article. Mr. Gigliotti shall revise the article before then sending it to Pat Young of the SRWP, who shall then circulate the article to the watershed groups, before it officially gets published in the Rivereast.

Subdivisions

Jay Gigliotti reviewed two (2) potential subdivisions that may be proposed in the near future. He explained that the OSAC had discussed these subdivisions at the December meeting and since that time, the P&Z Department has not heard anything new regarding either of the two (2) subdivisions. If one or both of the subdivisions are submitted as an application, the OSAC will have to review and make a recommendation to the Conservation Commission regarding the proposed open space on either subdivision.

Open Space Fund Accounts

At the December OSAC meeting, Jay Gigliotti explained the P&Z Department is looking at a potential submission of an Open Space Grant application to the CT DEEP for funding of an open space land acquisition. There is a matching component to the CT DEEP Open Space Grant Programs and in order to effectively develop an application, the P&Z Dept. needed to know exactly how much was available in the Town's two (2) open space accounts. As Mr. Gigliotti explained at the December meeting, it is not as simple as just checking the balances in these two (2) accounts. So unfortunately he was unable to have a total for the OSAC in December however, he was able to get the balances for this January meeting.

The town's first Open Space Fund account is the "Open Space Fee in Lieu" account. This account is funded by developers who have submitted applications for subdivision and have been authorized by the land use commissions to pay a "fee in lieu" of Open Space land. The balance of this account is \$34,944.65. The second account is the "Open Space Acquisition" account and is funded by the Town, annually, depositing \$5,000 in each budget (fiscal) year. This account has a balance of \$7,000, however, the town has appropriated \$5,000 for the current fiscal year (17-18) and has not yet been deposited. So really the O.S. Acquisition account has a balance of \$11,000, but with the State shorting the Town of Colchester by \$1.7 million this year, Jay Gigliotti was informed that there is a potential that the appropriated \$5,000 for the 17-18 fiscal year may be ceased to help make up the \$1.7 million shortfall. The good news is no decision regarding ceasing this money will be made anytime soon, as the town will operate until close to the end of the fiscal year before ceasing any funds to make up for the shortfall.

So there is a total of \$41,944.65, which could be readily used for open space acquisition. This money, most likely would be used as a matching component for an Open Space Program Grant Application to the CT DEEP.

CT DEEP Open Space & Watershed Lands Acquisition Program (OSWA)

Jay Gigliotti explained the town had received correspondence from the CT Land Conservation Council, which indicated the CT DEEP Open Space & Watershed Lands Acquisition program had survived the state's budget cuts and would definitely be funded for the 2018 grant round. In discussing this at the December meeting, the OSAC inquired if the Colchester Land Trust (CLT) had any properties on their radar for open space preservation, which they would not be able to fund at this time.

Jay Gigliotti explained that he and the Town Planner had met with the president and another member of the Colchester Land Trust to discuss potential properties for open space preservation. Resulting from this meeting town staff was able to develop a list of potential land acquisitions, which would meet the open space acquisition criteria identified in the town's Open Space Plan. He passed out a list and a map, of five (5) properties that meet several criteria which would be feasible for an application to the CT DEEP open space acquisition program.

Reviewing this list with the OSAC, Jay Gigliotti explained that staff was able to narrow it down to one (1) of these properties and are currently in negotiations with the real estate agent for the property owner. This property, is 55 acres and is known as 541 Lebanon Avenue (Route 16). The two (2) most significant criteria for an application to the OSWA program was that the property owners were interested/ property is for sale and the purchase price could not exceed \$100,000. The cap on the purchase price is directly related to the due date of the OSWA program, which is February 1st. Any land acquisitions purchased for greater than \$100,000, requires two (2) separate appraisals. The town has an appraiser who has the ability to do an appraisal in a few days, however, it is not likely that the town would be able to find another appraiser who could do a second appraisal before the due date of the grant.

The 541 Lebanon Avenue (Route 16) property is located in the middle of the Sherman's Brook Greenway and contains a number of small tributary streams that feed into Sherman's Brook. It also contains a fair amount of wetlands and abuts a number of other open space properties. The property is additionally located within the Colchester Land Trust's "Eastern Corridor". Jay Gigliotti also ran the property in the town's Open Space criteria calculator located in the Town's open space plan and it scores high in almost every open space category, making the property a more than desirable piece for open space acquisition.

Jay Gigliotti explained that he was looking for the OSAC to endorse the P&Z Department's submission of a grant application for this 55 acre property, to the CT DEEP OSWA program. He explained that staff was still in discussions with the property owner's agent regarding the purchase price and there is a potential an agreement would not be reached. However, in case staff and the property owner were able to come to an agreement, the OSWA grant program requires endorsement from the town's open space committee. Being as the grant is due on 2/1/18, which is before the next regular meeting of the OSAC, staff was trying to get an endorsement from the committee this evening.

Motion made by Linda Grzeika to endorse the Colchester Planning & Zoning Department's submission of an application to the CT DEEP Open Space & Watershed Lands Acquisition Program, for the acquisition of 541 Lebanon Avenue (Route 16) as open space. Seconded by Mary Stevens. All Members Voted in Favor. Motion Carried.

5. **Any Other Business Deemed Necessary:**

6. **Adjournment**

Motion made by Linda Grzeika to adjourn the 1/8/18 meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee, seconded by Mary Stevens. All Members Voted in Favor. Motion Carried.

Chairman William Hochholzer adjourned the January 8, 2018 OSAC meeting at 6:40pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Jay Gigliotti