

Open Space Committee  
Town of Eastham  
Minutes  
October 29, 2014

Members Present: Bob Gurney (chair), Peter Wade, Robert Cook, Karen Baker

Staff Present: Dick Hilmer

Visitors Present: Henry Lind, Eastham Conservation Foundation

Loretta Nielsen and Debbie Abbott, Friends of 1651 Forest

Charles Harris, Eastham Resident

Meeting called to order at 7:03 PM

1. Minutes of Meeting of September 29, 2014 were reviewed and approved as amended.
2. Proposal for plantings at entrance to Wiley Park. - Loretta Nielsen and Debbie Abbot of the Friends of the 1651 Forest presented a proposal for additional plantings at the entrance to Wiley Park. This proposal would expand the area that was planted with flowers and shrubs in 2014 by clearing additional vegetation already growing on-site, mechanically levelling the topography, adding topsoil, and planting a number of species of flowers, shrubs, and small trees. The proposal also included removal of a couple of existing pitch pine trees, to address what they felt was a problem for people being able to see the entrance to the park, and to eliminate them shading the plantings. The cost of this proposal would be \$20,000, which they proposed to fund through a request from the Community Preservation Act Funds.

Mr. Cook expressed concerns over these proposals, stating that they are a drift from the purpose of the 1651 Forest Project, which was to be a forest restoration project designed to restore/recreate the forest that existed in Eastham in 1651. Instead of focusing on the forest restoration goal, which is a good one, this project is more of a gardening and landscaping project, and not consistent with managing Wiley Park as a natural area, which is the focus and charge of the Open Space Committee. Concerns were raised about removing naturally occurring native vegetation to expand the amount of formal plantings, the need for imported topsoil to grow native species supposedly adapted to local conditions, and the overall costliness of doing this as opposed to leaving the existing native vegetation alone. Mr. Cook indicated he was okay with the extent of the plantings that were installed in 2014, and would be okay with some augmentation of those within the existing footprint, but he was not in support of expanding the area and further removal of naturally-occurring plants at the entrance. He felt that \$20,000 could be much better spent to support the protection and management of Town natural areas in other ways. Other members of the committee also expressed concern over this proposed use of CPA funds.

3. Dyer Prince Conservation Restriction and Parking Area. - Dick Hilmer reviewed history of the recent acquisition of Harris Parcel at west end of Dyer Prince Road as it relates to the 2014 regular town meeting article stipulation that the parcel have a conservation restriction (CR) placed on it. Mr. Hilmer described the process of seeking out potential partners to be holders of the CR and how that process has lead to Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts ("the Compact"). Henry Lind of the Eastham Conservation Foundation (ECF) explained that a CR is a cooperative partnership between the grantor and the holder of the CR. Due to legal

requirements the CR would be legally held by the Compact and the ECF would assist them in the monitoring of the CR. Mr. Hilmer indicated he has reviewed a first draft CR from Town Counsel Kopelman and Page in great detail, and is working on it with Town Counsel and Town Administrator to create a second draft. The plan is to finalize a second draft which will then be reviewed by Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission (who is official custodian of the land) and then sent on to the Compact, for their review.

4. Turtle Cove, Widgeon Road CPA Application. - Henry Lind (ECF) spoke of the efforts and activities of ECF, the "Compact", and Massachusetts Audubon to support the acquisition of this parcel through a combination of state matching grants, private fundraising, and Community Preservation Act funds. The Open Space Committee will be the official applicant for the Community Preservation Act funds. Dick Hilmer is preparing the project application for the Committee, with assistance from the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts. If the acquisition of this property is successful, the plan is for Massachusetts Audubon (Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary) to hold the CR. However, the key determinant will be whether we are successful in obtaining the state matching grant.

5. Sandy Meadows bid progress. - Dick Hilmer reported that the solicitation is going to be re-issued and distributed more broadly in the hopes of soliciting a larger number of respondents.

6. Open Space and Recreation Plan. - Dick Hilmer reported that although this plan was conditionally approved by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the condition was contingent on responding to 15 questions relating to the plan and planning process. Dick Hilmer is researching the response to these questions and will prepare a draft response for the committee to review.

7 New Business. - Dick Hilmer noted that the committee is down a member and needs to consider ways to fill its vacancy.

8. Old Business. - Mr. Charles Harris re-presented a proposal he had made earlier this year to construct a stairway out of seven granite blocks that he wishes to donate on the Glacial Ponds Trail as it emerges out of the Nickerson Conservation Area and onto a road crossing at Samoset Road. Mr. Harris feels there is a safety hazard at this road crossing and the proposed stairway would address this. Mr. Harris initially presented this proposal at the April 23, 2014 meeting, at which time there was discussion among the committee as to the need for this action and whether, if needed, the proposed action would best address it. Following individual site visits, the committee discussed this proposal again on June 18, 2014. In that discussion, some members again questioned to the extent to which a problem existed, and the committee as a whole indicated they did not support the proposal as it stood.

At this evening's meeting Mr. Harris re-presented his proposal and a discussion similar to past ones ensued. Mr. Cook questioned the extent to which a safety problem exists and suggested that other less intrusive actions such as a "Road Crossing Ahead" sign on the trail just before Samoset Road, and a "landing with a single step" at Samoset Rd. could address the potential safety concern without building a series of steps down into the kettle hole. Dick Hilmer indicated that any action that disturbs the hard-packed soil would create an erosion problem with potential for soil to flow down into the vernal pond below. Henry Lind also pointed out that the area in question is within the wetland adjacent zone for that vernal pond, and any action there would require permits from the Conservation Commission. After additional discussion

with Mr. Wade and Dick Hilmer on planning and design issues, Mr. Harris was asked to discuss these aspects further with DPW and the Conservation Commission, at which point he can return to discuss further with the Open Space Committee.

Next meeting: November 12, 2014

Meeting adjourned 9:17 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Robert P. Cook

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