

The Chair, Jack Steiner at 7:30am called the scheduled Selectmen's meeting to order. Those present included George Lagassa, Lloyd Sullivan (Selectmen), and Russell McAllister (Town Administrator). Members of the North Hampton Forever Committee (NHF), a sub-committee of the Conservation Commission, included Roland Neves, Philip Wilson, Chris Ganotis, Dick Wollmar and Charles Gordon.

Mr. Neves thanked the Board for meeting with them on such short notice. Mr. Neves explained that the concept behind North Hampton Forever was to preserve the rural character of the Town for future generations. One way to preserve the open space and farmland characteristic of the Town was to place developable land parcels into conservation easements. This removed the development rights and therefore preserved open space and farmland. It was also a means to lower the overall tax burden. Mr. Wilson explained that conservation easements precluded residential development, which in turn translated into lower service costs for the Town in the area of schools and infrastructure maintenance. Per pupil educational costs were discussed. Mr. Ganotis noted that the average assessed value of a single-family residence needed to support the educational costs of one student was approximately \$600,000. Mr. Wilson explained that it was the goal of North Hampton Forever to place up to 60% (800 acres) of the developable land in Town (1,300 acres). Mr. Wilson explained that the group was interested in properties with more than 5 acres. The key component in the plan were the use of easement, donations of land and as a last resort the outright purchase of the land. Several maps prepared by the Rockingham Planning Commission were consulted. The maps revealed where potential developable land was located. Mr. Neves noted that land was currently available, but that they needed to act quickly to acquire conservation easements and therein was the rub. Mr. Wilson explained that their preliminary analysis indicated that easement costs would average approximately \$10,000 per acre. The group reasoned that it would take approximately a 5 million-dollar bond issue to acquire the easements to 800 acres. Mr. Sullivan asked how it would work. Mr. Neves explained that if the Town approved a bond issue in the amount of 5 million dollars the Conservation Commission could actively acquire conservation easements. Mr. Sullivan asked if the public could have access to the property with conservation easements. Mr. Wilson replied that they would not and that many current easements precluded public access. Mr. Sullivan then asked how he would explain to Jane Citizen that she could not go on land with conservation easements that her tax money paid for. The TA noted that the repayment terms on a 5 million-dollar bond over a 15-year period at 5.2% interest would add approximately one dollar to the tax rate. It was also noted that debt service portion of the operating budget would climb to 16% of the total operating budget. Throughout the discussion Board and Committee members agreed that it was a good concept to preserve open space and farmland for future generations, but the mechanism for achieving those ends were difficult. It was also difficult to discern public support for the bond issue. The Board agreed to support the idea. Mr. Sullivan made the motion to support the North Hampton Forever plan to seek voter approval for a 5 million dollar bond issue. Mr. Lagassa seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

There being no further business to come before the Board the public meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30am.

Respectfully,

Russell McAllister
Town Administrator