

**EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES**

**TOWN OF STOW  
Community Preservation Committee**

**Amended** Executive Session Minutes, October 3, 2016

**Community Preservation Committee Meeting**

*Community Preservation Committee members present:* Cortni Frecha (chair), Dot Spaulding, Mike Busch (arrived at 7:35 PM), Bill Byron, Ernie Dodd, Bob Larkin, Rick Connelly

*Not Present:* Paul McLaughlin, Vin Antil

*Admin. Assistant:* Krista Bracci

*Liaison:* Brian Burke

The meeting began with a quorum at 7:30 PM

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21A(6)**

Bob made a motion to enter into executive session with the Conservation Commission (Kathy Sferra) and the Stow Conservation Trust (Bob Wilber) to discuss real estate negotiations with the meeting to adjourn from executive session, and not return to open session. A roll call vote was taken:

Cortni - aye  
Bill - aye  
Dot - aye  
Bob - aye  
Ernie - aye  
Rick - aye

***Mike arrived at 7:35 pm***

Kathy Sferra from the Conservation Commission and Bob Wilber of the Stow Conservation Trust requested to meet with the Community Preservation Committee in Executive Session so not to undermine their real estate negotiations with the owners of Carver Hill and Small Farm. They wanted to gauge how the members of the CPC felt about the potential request for CPA funds to obtain conservation restrictions on both farms before continuing negotiations. Kathy supplied some visual materials for the committee to review which will be filed with these minutes. Kathy and Bob W. are hoping to bring this purchase to the Spring 2017 Town Meeting.

Some background information was given about how important these two parcels are for the town of Stow and the different deed restrictions that are available to place on these farms.

The Conservation Restriction and Agricultural Preservation Restriction are close cousins and extinguish all potential residential development in perpetuity. The APR does permanently cap the value of the land and the sale value would be less than land with a CR. The CR does not guarantee the land will be farmed. It could be used for open space. It is important to note that land with a CR will be more affordable to farm on than land with no CR.

Reasons to save Stow farms presented by Bob Wilber:

- Lower town costs
- More job opportunities for children under 16 years of age
- Lower carbon footprint to obtain healthy food
- Able to purchase healthy foods locally
- More open space to maintain Stow's rural character

### **CARVER HILL**

This farm is currently owned by a family trust made up of four members of the Lord family (two are key players). The farm is approximately 78 to 79 acres and is not completely farmed, maybe about 1/3 of it is in farming. SCT and the town have been talking with the Lords for about a year to eighteen months. The owners need money for retirement and have indicated they want the land to remain a farm. Chuck Lord was injured seriously last year and is no longer able to work. His son has shown interest in continuing to farm the land.

#### **Discussion on why it is important to protect this parcel of land:**

- The land abuts conservation land and the Elizabeth Brook which is important for wildlife.
- If the land is not protected about 30 new homes could be placed on this property.
- In 1993 the Open Space Committee was formed and ranked conserving this piece of property over Pilot Grove.
- The current Open Space Plan put together various attributes for all land in Stow. Carver Hill was the only land area that met all seven attributes (even above the golf courses in town).

Two appraisals of the land have been done. One by the owners and one by the town (they were within 7% of each other). The appraisal that was done by the owners came in higher and was kept private for some time.

Appraisal Information:    \$ 3,700,000 Value of Property (29 - 30 lots)  
                                      \$ 1,150,000 Restricted Land Value (held by owner)

The Conservation Restriction would then be worth \$2,550,000.

Potential Funding:    \$ 1,400,000 CPA Funds  
                                      \$ 100,000 SCT  
                                      \$ 500,000 State Land Grant (max you can get)

The total coming to \$2,000,000. Bob W made the CPC aware that we are asking the owners for a steep discount. He also indicated that he felt the owners most likely would accept this offer even though they mentioned wanting full value. Kathy and Bob W have spent many hours drafting the CR which only

allows one additional house on the property. Ernie mentioned that it will cost the town more money if new homes are placed on the land versus obtaining a CR. A recent town survey indicated that the people of Stow wanted to maintain the rural character of town.

### **SMALL FARM**

This farm is located on Gleasondale Road and was owned by Dwight and his late wife Barbara. The land is approximately 22 acres. Bob Wilber said that \$300,000 would be a bargain for this land. The appraisal most likely will come in at about 2 or 3 times the \$300,000. He also mentioned that the SCT could look into other funding sources and a State Grant.

### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

There was no formal proposal, but the SCT and the Town of Stow is potentially looking for a total of \$1.7 million of CPA funding for both farms. Currently, the unreserved CPA account has over \$3.6 million in it. There was some quick discussion about the town having the right of first refusal if the properties were sold to developers.

### **Questions Raised:**

- What is some comparative land that is for sale. Vineyards? Tree farms?
- Will the CPA account run out of money too fast?
- What is the likelihood that other farms will run to the CPC for APR's and CR's?
- How will the residents in town feel about conserving so much land?
- Is there a concern that large homes can be built on CR land?
- Should be prepared for the question: How much more land will the town buy?
- Does this prevent people from moving into town?
- Keep in mind that more homes equal more money spent for the Fire Department, Schools, Police and Highway Department. Doesn't a CR make sense?

### **Conclusion:**

The majority of the members felt they were in favor of this potential project and gave permission to Kathy and Bob W to go back to both land owners.

### **Adjournment**

At 9:00 PM Bob made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mike seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously. Roll call vote:

Cortni - aye  
Bill - aye  
Dot - aye  
Bob - aye  
Ernie - aye  
Mike - aye  
Rick - aye

Respectfully submitted by: Krista Bracci

**Approved and released on May 22, 2017**