

**TOWN OF STURBRIDGE, MA
CONSERVATION COMMISSION and RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

**Thursday, January 9, 2014
Sturbridge Center Office Building, 2nd Floor**

Meeting Called to Order: 4:08 pm

Meeting Adjourned: 5:07 pm

Quorum Check: Confirmed

Conservation Commission: Present: Ed Goodwin (EG), Chairman
Donna M. Grehl (DG)
Joseph Kowalski (JK)
Glenn Colburn (GC), Conservation Agent

Members Absent: David Barnicle, Vice Chairman
Calvin Montigny

Recreation Department: Present: Lynne Girouard (LG)

Others Present: Darci Scholfield (DS), Project Manager, The Trust for Public Land
Carol Goodwin (CG), Open Space
Cindy Sowa Forgit, Conservation Clerk

Purpose of Meeting (DS): To pursue the possibility of obtaining grant funds along with town funds to purchase this property for Open Space Purposes (wildlife habitat, protect the habitat, ball fields, forestry etc.). DS explained progress of this project thus far:

- Currently working with land owner and town to preserve the 320 acre property.
- Contract is currently in place: Status:
 - Title work has been completed on the land
 - Appraisal of Land is scheduled for next week. Estimated at \$5500.00/acre
 - Environmental Investigation will be completed in February
- Opportunity to put in playing/ball fields, open space etc.
- Funding Plan:
 - Working on this, need funds by next week's deadline.
 - Other entities that haven't been contacted yet: CPA, DFG, DRC for funds/buy in
 - CPC has requested an application, but it's not completed yet
- 10-20 Acres off of New Boston Road (entry point). Previously was an old Christmas Tree Farm and prior to that Gravel Pit. Current trees are about 15' tall, easy to remove.
- 2 Grant Programs: LAND (Local Acquisitions Natural Diversity) Grant and Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Grant
 - Speaking of Community Forest Grant Program today.
 - New program that is 2 yrs. in existence
 - Nationwide program
 - In order to qualify: must have 1) Active Forest Management and 2) Community Forest Plan. Note: The Community Forest Plan must be completed 120 days from receipt of grant.
 - Process: (LAND Grant works this way also)
 - Commission with the help of DS, applies up to \$400K (or amount agreed upon)
 - 50% of the grant, with a maximum amount of \$400K
 - Will require two town votes on this article. One vote for active rec fields, Second vote: Parks/Rec via BOS.
 - Deadlines:
 - Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Grant w/ State: next week ... w/Feds: February. Will hear back between September and December (but depends on Congress)
 - LAND Grant: Mid July. Will hear back between November/December (depends on State Budget)
 - \$1.6 million project: \$800K possible from two grants, the balance from town and other sources.
 - DS will act as a guide for the Town, but the Town must take the lead if we move forward.

Comments, Concerns, Questions:

- GC: DS confirmed that the parcel of land would not include the land situated in Brookfield, Sturbridge only. DS thinks that F&W may acquire these 25 acres. The town can only purchase land outside the town to protect the public water supply.

- EG, CG, LG and DG: Concern with Town reception of spending money on more land, for we currently have a lot of open land and significant debt. Many other projects in the pipeline that the Town has previously funded.
- DG: Has the entire area been walked, concern for existence of water sources? Some of the area was walked. EG, GC, JK discussed the wetlands area on plan.
- EG: What is required from the Town? DS is looking for a vote tonight if she should start the application process for the Community Forest Grant.
- DS: Spoke with Bob O'Conner, DCR and he is in support of applying for this grant as it's compatible with our community.
- LG: CPC – has made no new land purchases in about 5 years. Residents voted down the ball fields. Original price of \$8Million which included Shepard parcel (4-5 yrs. ago) and recently Tornado effected land.
- LG: Rec Meeting last night; discussed this and is in support of this, but at some point in the future. Currently working on improvements to the Town Barn multi-purpose field
- CG: Town Survey in 2010 showed 70% were in favor of "Open Space". Need to get DRC and CPC involvement and buy-in.
- DG: Hamilton Rod and Gun Club would be in full support.
- EG: May need a special town meeting to vote on this. Need to get Fish & Wildlife back in support with Conservations' mission/goals.
- DS: Would this work like Leadmine/Stewardship Property: All agreed, but the scenario is different than at Leadmine Mt. There are conservation restrictions with Fish and Wildlife as stated at the time of acquisition
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**MOTION: To move forward with applying for the Community Forest Grant on the Plimpton Property: DG 2nd Vote: Yea: 3
Ney: 0**

Next Steps:

DS needs GC to help with the meeting dates of when the Leadmine/Stewardship Meetings Occurred. Possibly to use this as a guide.