

Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee Meeting – December 13, 2016 Minutes

Time: 7:10 PM – 8:15 PM **Location:** Town Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room

Members Present: Tania Lillak, Vice Chair; Jim Olivetti, Clerk; Toni Bandrowicz, Richard Smith, Sara Pruett, Danielle Strauss, Recreation Director; Pete Kane, Director of Community Development (by phone); Patrick Jones, Selectman Liaison (by phone)

Members Absent: Mary Webster, Chair; Angela Ippolito, Planning Board Chair.

As Mary Webster was absent, Tania chaired the meeting.

The minutes of the November meeting were unanimously approved.

1. Discussion of the impending sale of White Court property.

The Committee reviewed the status of the White Court property in light of Fr. Andrew Bushell's presentation at the Board of Selectmen's meeting on December 7th. It was noted that several objectives in the Open Space & Recreation Plan are relevant to the final disposition of the property. Among the points made during discussion:

- In response to Toni's question, Pete stated that the Sisters of Mercy were not interested in putting any easements or restrictions on the property that might impede the sale.
- Only those practicing the orthodox religion of the monastery would have access to the grounds. A substantial wall is planned which would further hinder public access to the property and/or scenic viewshed.
- A brewery, which Fr. Bushnell stated was essential to his purchase, is not listed as allowed in Swampscott's zoning by-laws Table of Principal Uses. However, there is a question as to whether or not the monks would be permitted to ignore such local restrictions as a religious enterprise under the Massachusetts Dover Amendment.
- Fr. Bushnell has already sunk money into the purchase, with a date in December scheduled for closing.
- Pete thought he remembered correctly that the asking price was for White Court was \$4 million.

After discussion, Tania moved that the Committee prepare a letter to the Board of Selectmen recommending that the town purchase the White Court property to preserve the historic structure and ocean frontage open space, if the sale to Fr. Bushell is not successful. The motion was seconded, voted on, and unanimously approved.

Richard will reach out to the Historic Commission to see if they would write a letter as well, and Toni will contact the Conservation Commission to the same end. Patrick encouraged the committee to send the letter so that it is received before the next Selectmen's meeting on December 21. Toni will draft the letter and circulate it for comment. Tania will email the Board to alert them that the letter is on its way.

2. Friends of Swampscott Conservation Land.

There was some general discussion of individuals who might be interested in joining a Friends group, but no real conclusions drawn or next steps identified.

3. Maintenance Plan for Harold King Forest.

The Plan was not addressed.

4. Other Business.

- Toni raised the issue of signs for Ewing Woods and Harold King Forest. The Municipal Design Committee did not respond to her requests for advice on the signs. Toni said ConComm would probably have money to pay for the two signs. Danielle suggested looking at the baseball field sign behind the Middle School. Richard suggested the Town Hall sign might be a good optional design. Jim and Toni will talk with Gino about what resources DPW would have in terms of materials and installation.
- Danielle reported that Eagle Scout candidate Duncan Page will be taking on improvements to Harold King Forest trail and building of an information kiosk as a Eagle Scout project. She hopes to have a public event related to Duncan's work in June.
- Pete was asked about the status of the Rail Trail. He said he thought there would be the possibility of "news" after the first of the year. There is work being done on title issues; there are 8 separate pieces of land with 9 titles comprising the propose rail trail pathway.
- Tania has been in contact with Josh Field, chair of the Athletic Field Advisory Committee, to discuss working together on the goal to have an in-house field maintenance team for the town. The OS&RPC would like to implement an organic lawn maintenance pilot program for which extra town employees would be required. Currently the field maintenance is contracted out privately. Arrangements for Josh to attend one of our meetings or for Tania to attend one of theirs are in progress.

5. Phillips Park Artificial Turf Field Update.

Patrick reported that the turf field budget is being fine-tuned and the project will go out to bid soon. The intent is to have the field ready for the fall, 2017 season. A second round of fund raising is underway which will address amenities including a playground to replace the existing one displaced by the new field complex.

The Committee expressed its appreciation to Pete, who called in from Western Massachusetts despite being on leave, and Patrick, who called in from a job site, for their efforts to participate in the meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2017.