Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, January17th, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Chip Boyle Cathy Dodd Rick Holmes Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

Guests:

Doug Harris Timothy Fohl

\*Doug Harris of the Narragansett Indian Tribal Historic Preservation Office (NITHPO) presented information regarding Tribal perspectives on the stone groupings of Pratt Hill and a plan to assess areas which could be of Tribal significance. Indian Tribes may become involved in projects with federal ties and as the cell tower falls under FCC regulations the Pratt Hill project is open for input from Indian groups. The FCC will not license a tower on a site designated as sacred by NITHPO but this can be fought legally.

NITHPO is interested in partnering with other concerned parties such as the Open sSpace Committee, to preserve historic native sites. Mr. Harris recommended GPS-ing the stones and creating an overlay with the cell tower plans to see what, if any, intrusions are made onto ceremonial sites and sightlines.

There is support from the OSC and a statement of support can be made at the Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Planning Board (PB). Can PB get an overlay map made?

Mike Penko: The town is unlikely to support a purchase of the Pratt Hill land but it may be ideal for a self-help grant. It would look good to the town to see an outside funding source.

Cathy Dodd: The town might purchase the land with the possibility of leasing to the cell tower company.

Motion to support communication between NITHPO, property owner and PB. All in favor.

\*Bill for the Dodson study is in -\$6100, which is the amount available from appropriations. This does not include printing of copies for distribution to other committees. Rick will provide a proposal to do an "executive summary" and abbreviated list of people who should have a full copy.

#### Motion to pay \$6100 to Dodson Associates. All in favor.

\*Metacomet Land trust has \$667 for Upton-related projects and OSC has the authority to spend it.

\*There is still a question of access at Miscoe Hill. Access may be possible from Mendon. There's a piece of land which may provide an easement through Philbrick-owned land.

Mr. Beckshaw will keep us informed if there's a possible sale of the land coming up.

\*Mike is working on an OS plan update. Rick asked him to identify what items from the Dodson Report can be incorporated in the OS plan or it could reference the Dodson Report.

\*Rock wood Meadows CR at Amato Farms – part of the land is located in Hopkinton. Can we get a CR for the Hopkinton portion?

#### **\*Officers elected for 2008**

Chip Boyle, Mike Penko – Co-Chairs Marcella Stasa - Secretary

#### All in favor.

\*Post hike schedule on web-site.

February- Goss pond March- Big Night April- Upton Chamber May- Old Zac paddle

\*Rick will work on the Scenic Roads By-law. OS and PB should work together and aim to have it for September Town Meeting.

\*Mike presented web-site mock up.

\*Mike gave info on Metacomet Land Trust. New memberships welcome.

\*Rail Trail could be another project for 2008. Should it be added as a priority? We should check status of rails.

Cathy will call Donna Williams.

Look into Hopedale Mills connection.

Try to get a rep from each town to meet and discuss.

Contact Rail-to-Trail consultant.

# (Meeting adjourned, 10-ish)

Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, February 22nd, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Chip Boyle Tom Dodd Rick Holmes Marcella Stasa

Rick has the completed Open Space Report. Full copies to go to The Planning Board members, Town Clerk's Office and the Library. Executive Summaries to other committees. No word yet on funding. We can see about getting \$250 from the Con Com, spend down what Open Space has left in the budget and see if the Land Stewardship Committee can add anything.

Should the big maps be displayed at the Town Meeting with a guide sheet?

Open Space Report should go up on the website in March.

Marcella will do a write-up for the Town Crier.

Chip investigated Grafton Upton Rail Trail (GURT). The railroad is still for sale but running in Grafton. It's time to bring in a consultant (Craig DeLavalle) (sp?)

Big night preparation: Fowler street looks like the most accessible location. We should acquire some orange cones and signage-does the park service have any? We could see if the police might be willing to put up barriers.

We can identify other vernal pools for future Big Nights

(Meeting adjourned, 9.10 PM)

Meeting Minutes, **Upton Open Space Committee,** April 17th, 2008, 7.30 pm Gathering Room, Nipmuc High

Members present:

Chip Boyle Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

Guest:

Jen Thompson

Mike presented a draft of the Open Space and Recreation Plan for review and a copy of the workbook. We each have this on a disk now to look over at home. Mike suggested meeting weekly in addition to our regular monthly meetings until we get it finished. It was agreed to set the meetings for Tuesdays at 7.30, starting with April 29. Marcella will find a space to meet.

Jen Thompson presented maps which showed a 75 acre lot abutting Pulte open space and Upton State Forest. Her original idea was to get four horse lots onto the property but the Planning Board wants a road with a turnaround circle, the cost of which would necessitate additional lots (10?).

Mike pointed out that the town is not always receptive to land purchases, however there are CPA funds and self-help grants.

Ms Thompson said that the land was assessed @ 700,000 +, but that that she would consider selling it at perhaps 10% less than the assessed amount.

Mike suggested a single lot with the original driveway idea and an offer of the rest of the land to the town at a "bargain". If there is only one lot the road with a turnaround circle could be eliminated.

The property looks like a good candidate for a self-help grant. A site visit was scheduled for 8AM on Sunday April 27<sup>th</sup>.

Marcella had attended a meeting with John Zakian, the newly appointed grant writer for the Town of Upton. He could be helpful in bringing funds to some of our projects. We should keep our eyes open for grant possibilities, which Marcella can forward to Mr. Zakian to see if they are worth his pursuit.

Mike mentioned the possibility of the town voting to lower Community Preservation Act funds from 3% of property tax assessment to 1%. This would not only cause the CPA money to be reduced but we would lose matching funds. A reduction in CPA money would limit or stop open space land purchases.

We should put together a list of CPA expenditures to present a strong argument in favor of keeping it at 3%. We should get a letter or flyer out. Mike will e-mail Rick Holmes since he is on the Community Preservation Committee.

We have the Dodson maps for display at the town meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Mike will look into purchasing plexiglass frame/protective cover for a better display.

Chip will help keep website updated.

For the website:

Dates of Open Space events Pictures Minutes Meeting schedule

Meeting adjourned 9.15

Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, May15th, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Chip Boyle Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

Minutes will be approved and distributed via e-mail as Rick Holmes suggested. This was fine with those attending.

Chip Boyle, Tom Dodd and Marcella Stasa walked the Thompson site and GPSed to identify access points and features such as stone walls, barn and wetlands. It is likely a wildlife corridor and TD identified potential four-toed salamander habitat. We would need some appraisals to proceed with a self-help grant. Money could also come from Community Preservation Committee (CPC).

Barbara Burke will be looking to get an urban self-help grant for the Upton Chamber property and will be asking for Community Preservation Act funds.

We might consider contacting Kelly's regarding land abutting Peppercorn Hill. Should we set land acquisition priorities? Miscoe? Thompson? Peppercorn?

There is an open period to help with self-help grants. Miscoe wasnot a great prospect but the Thompson property has a shot. 58% would come from the state and would have to be accepted by the town; the rest would come from CPC.

Create a score the resources for the proposals and put a summary of the proposal on the town website to keep info out there that we are evaluating properties on westborough Road and Miscoe Hill.

Access to Miscoe Hill property from Mendon is there but passes through private property. Should we be pro-active, talk to property owners and plan ahead for land use? Are there deals to offer? We should meet with the CPC in June, meeting is on June 4<sup>th</sup>. CB will talk to Rick about this

CB will work on the website. MS would like to develop a survey to see what sort of activities and programs the public would like from the OSC. This could go on the website.

MP spoke to Pulte workers this morning. He noticed as he was driving by that the area in which they were pulling stumps they had also destroyed a stone wall. this was on one of the open space parcels and they were not supposed to remove the wall. MP was told that all the materials were being stored.

We will continue work on the Open Space and Recreation Plan. CB would like to see maps that show density and buildout

MS will compile a contact list of OSC members.

(Meeting adjourned, 9.30)

## Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, June 19th, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Chip Boyle Cathy Dodd Tom Dodd Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

Chip is still waiting for access to the website.

Mike is proposing a fuel wood lottery. There are some trees to be taken down at the Elm Street Chamber and at Stefans among other town-owned parcels. A listing can be put in the Town Crier in September with details. This should be proposed to the Conservation Commission.

The Kent property on both sides of Westborough Road will be for sale. It is 50 or 60 acres of chapter 61 land and the family would like to see as much as possible preserved. It abuts State Forest land and the state might be interested but there are already two properties they are giving attention to. Five of the children of the Kent family are in the trust and they may sell some buildable lots.

Metacomet Land Trust meeting regarding Rockwood Meadows will be re-scheduled for July.

Doug Harris says that the state is still interested in Pratt Hill. An archaeology study still needs to be done. The Oak Hairstreak butterfly (species of special concern) has been mapped for Pratt Hill based on sighting on Mechanic Street.

Will we be able to get the Scenic Roads Bylaw ready for the September Town Meeting? The Storm Water Bylaw is going forward – Con Com is working with Ken Picard on that. It's in the Master Plan and we would be implementing it.

Glen Echo soccer field parking lot is planned very close to the foundation of the old schoolhouse. The plan could be changed to shrink the size of the field and reduce its impact.

MESA application regarding the Stefans parking, garden and day-use areas has been signed by selectman Robert Fleming and submitted by the Land Stewardship Committee. If the application is approved we may be working with Lisa Stratton on the Community Garden. We'll need to look at amending the soil and bringing water in. Lisa is very motivated but the Open Space committee and LSC should be the guiding body. We need to be sure that clean fill is used and that contaminants are kept out of Warren Brook. Gardeners would probably need to sign waivers and have license agreements with the town and this would be monitored by the LSC. Access to the Miscoe Hill parcel might still be possible through Mendon. We should ask self-help grantors on their thoughts on access since the road has not been abandoned from Mendon. It is still a good keystone property abutting chapter 61 land.

August or September would be a good time to make contact and Mike will be in touch with the owner, Mr. Beckshaw.

Mike made a motion to contact the state self-help program and follow through. This was unanimously approved.

We need to look into access to the Knowlton Risteen Building during off hours to do GIS work.

Rick Holmes brought Jen Thompson's property on Westborough road to the attention of the Community Preservation Committee. The Planning Board members on the CPC were not opposed to an open space development. Ms. Thompson was aware of the Open Space Bylaw. She had previously asked about putting in an A&R lot and selling the rest to the town. The OSC does not have to be involved except to comment on an open space plan.

The Thompson land checklist was reviewed. Comments were made on how to improve the checklist.

Chip suggested we have an on-line file where we can access and store OSC information.

The five year action plan was reviewed.

# (Meeting adjourned, 1030)

## Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, August 21st, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Chip Boyle Cathy Dodd Tom Dodd Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

Guests:

Katie Gellenbeck, Sudbury Valley Trustees Gail Harrington, Sweetwilliam Farm Lisa Mosczynski, Metacomet Land Trust Rob Nicholson, Sweetwilliam Farm Tom DiPersio, Thomas Land Surveyors and Engineering Consultants Jennifer Thompson, Westborough Road

Gail Harrington presented her case for preserving Sweetwilliam Farm and the difficulty of of doing this. She wants to sell the development rights to her land and she is considering a conservation restriction. She wants to try to preserve the entire farm. The west side is part of the ACEC and the land abuts the Upton State Forest on the east. There are about 92 acres. Rob Nicholson wants to pursue farming and is now making a go of it with the CSA.

MP-It is a priorty parcel in Upton and can contribute to making a contiguous 500 acre parcel. We would have to go to CPA Committee. We'd need to get an appraisal. We might get self-help unds and CPA funds. We also have other land of interest to pursue. There is no town money and we don't see much promise in an override for such an expenditure.

CB- We should explore alternative possibilities.

LM- How much is in agriculture?

RN- Farm Program has turned us down.

GH- it was applied for four or five years ago.

LM- The program has changed a bit.

MP- A partnership may be looked at differently.

LM- With a new administration and the Environmental Bond Bill we have a different climate in which to work.

KG- Sudbury Valley Trust is very interested. We need an idea of the value of the propertyt and what a developer would value it at.

CB- Do we need a site walk? CPC members should weigh in.

TD- Are there any appraisals?

LM- Has the family come to an agreement on how the land is to be used and preserved?

RN- We will need to move animals and fields.

MP- Public access required for town acquisition.

GH- No problem.

KG- Chestnut Hill was a successful combination of conservation restriction, fund-raising,

etc. We can borrow some of the Chestnut Hill strategies.

LM- What is the timeframe?

GH- I need to know what my strategy would be.

MP- Self-help grant deadline is. July 15<sup>th</sup> 2009.

LM- Do you abut any watershed?

MP- Warren Brook. Is it premature to do an appraisal?

GH- The bank is in the process.

MP- We need to value the CR.

KG- Do you have an appraiser? Some made broad assumptions that skewed results.

TD- For Stefans we used Landvest

KG- We've seen mixed results from Landvest.

TD- They picked up on some things, and pointed out some useful things.

KG- Does the town have a plan for installment?

LM- Is any of the land under Chapter 61?

GH- No, never has been.

MP- You might want to cut out the house and the store before the appraisal. Any frontage?

GH- About 600 feet of total frontage.

TD- Is there any gifting capability? At Stefans there was talk about gifting land for a tax break.

LM- Metacomet Land Trust recommends talking to a financial advisor. There might be a tax benefit somewhere.

MP- How to fund the appraisal; CPC or conservation fund? We may have to ask about a town approval.

TD- Do we need two appraisals?

LM- If the state is involved, yes.

MP- Should we do one initial appraisal to see where we stand?

KG- Copuld be \$4000-\$6000.

TD- Stefans was about \$4000.

MP- We don't have self –help pressure.

CB- Do we have about a year?

TD- Made motion to go forward with Sweetwilliam Farm Project.

Seconded and unanimously accepted.

LM- Metacomet bus tour is sold out-Sweetwilliam Farm is on the tour.

Jen Thompson and Tom DiPersio came back with a follow-up plan for Westborough Road Parcel. Ms Thompson asked if the town is interested in the open space development or the whole parcel.

CD- If it's not an open space plan how would the plan look?

JT- Part of it is protected land. We are going to try for an A&R lot on Westborough Road but we won't sell it if the town is interested, but a road would go through.

MP- Check with the Planning Board about A&R lot and a road.

TDi- It would be an easement.

MP- Are you interested in donating the land for a tax credit?

JT- I don't know much about it but I might consider it.

MP- It could enhance the value of the lots.

TD- There's a right of way from Glen Echo, could a road go in there?

TDi-Possibly, but the grades are steep.

TD- Would it be more expensive than a wetland crossing?

TDi-Yes.

TD- Is the Planning Board (PB) accepting this plan?

TDi- PB liked the idea liked the idea of large lots, but has a problem with the driveway.

Will it be a common driveway, private driveway or subdivision Road? This plan is for a subdivision road.

MP- What's the square footage of the wetland crossing?

TDi- About 500ft.

MP- The Conservation Commission has some leeway, doesn't have to approve a limited crossing but some negotiation would be in order. If the four-toed salamander has been de-listed that's one less obstacle.

CD- What is the cost and width of the road?

JT- Originally wanted it low impact gravel.

MP- How much would you ask for if you sold it to the town?

JT- I would like to get about \$600.000 for all of it. I hadn't thought about breaking it up.

MP- We don't have the money to make the land purchase.

We'll make comments to PB and make points that it would be good for open space.

JT- How would we go about having the land appraised for possible donation?

CD- Does Parcel B have enough frontage to be buildable?

JT- Maybe for a small house.

What are the laws regarding how many horses on how much land?

MP- Check with the Board of Health (BoH).

TD- Does the BoH have some say in streams and horses?

# MP :

We should go to town meeting to give a "Conservation Area" (CA) designation for the additional three Glen Echo parcels. Name it "Glen Echo CA". Also name "Stefans Farm Town of Upton Open Space".

Pratt Hill- Doug Harris is trying to negotiate with the state and Mr Uhlman. Trust for Public Land is not interested.

Rockwood Meadows Conservation Restriction is on hold. The project might change but Mr. Lobissier will try to keep the same footprint.

Casino on 500 acres in Milford in butterfly habitat.

Kent property- Kent family is interested in selling it to the town or state; or have a limited development. We should run it through our checklist. We should make a list of

possibilities at the end of the checklist. Kent property is a state forest connector but the Brown property in the state forest is a priority.

We still need to get money for the Sweetwilliam Farm appraisal. Katie from SVT suggested breaking up the funding sources. It's still a challenge. A limited development is possible.

Don Kerr on Crockett Road is interested in forming a citizen's group to acquire land at Peppercorn Hill.

We need to rank the parcels and see how they score.

Discussed Open Space and Recreation Plan

(Meeting adjourned, 10.20)

Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, September 18th, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Chip Boyle Tom Dodd Rick Holmes Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

MP- We have a few parcels to rate with the checklist:

1. Kent property which is held in a trust with five siblings wanting to sell.

2. Sweetwilliam Farm-Gail Harrington was at our last meeting and we agreed to give her our support.

She's working with a developer and the property owner to the north.

Sudbury Valley Trust (SVT) is interested in helping but the cost is high. They are willing to help us with self-help, Town of Upton and a limited Development.

Upton is now in map of SVT service area.

Mike asked Gail for a plan to see how many lots there would be and go through the Open Space Process. We don't know who the developer would be but it would be "green"

3. RH- Selectmen are still pursuing a third water source on West River Rd through gravel pit; want to use CPA funds and call it open space. There was a P&S on the property but it has expired. Richards wants to base appraisal value on the value of water. Would this property score well on the checklist? A lot is floodplain under USACE. There are wood turtles and there's potential for rare plants

4. Don Kerr on Crockett Road is interested in forming a citizen's group to acquire, preferably by donation, land at Peppercorn Hill to complete the CA to include the top of Peppercorn Hill. He came to a recent Land Stewardship Committee meeting to present the idea. He has contacted the Kelly family and was told that it would be best to check back in November when they are less busy with the farm.

TD- We should use existing properties to measure against.

MP-There are a lot of parcels coming up.

RH- Top of Peppercorn Hill could be cell tower site

MP- The Kellys are shopping the parcel but asking more than it's worth.

TD- Amato access? The over 55 project (now planned to be an adult athletic facility) landlocked the Kellys

MP- Might Mr. Lobisser sell Amato Farm?

CB- We should do the checklist before November to assess Peppercorn, at least.

TD- It would help to have a number rating on the checklist to be able to make a fair comparison between parcels.

MP- Pratt Hill recap:

Because of the cultural resource (stones) the deal fell through. Mr. Cody is investigating Pearl Street as an alternate cell tower site. Mr. Uhlman is disappointed and Mr. Harris loses control over the stones if there is no cell tower project.

Mike called each party and encouraged them to meet. They agreed to meet one more time at 9AM Tuesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> in the Knowlton Risteen building. We should be neutral. CB- How does Pearl Street compare as a cell tower site?

MP-It would need a 500 foot wetland crossing and variances from the Planning Board. It is unclear if Mr. Uhlman has disturbed the stones.

RH- The Selectmen are lobbying to get CPC funds for Town Hall renovation and ADA compliance.

It's a 6 million dollar project. There's a hearing on October 1<sup>st</sup> in the Media Center at Nipmuc.

There's 1 million in CPC money and \$60,000 coming.

It's \$400,000 for the engineering study and \$170,000 just for the concept plan.

The plan is to gut the building and expose the vaulted ceilings. Town offices would be in basement (not covered by CPC).

Chip has set up the website. Gave a tour through the site.

Work on Open Space and Recreation Plan on Tuesday October 7<sup>th</sup>, 7.30 in Gathering Room at Nipmuc

(Meeting adjourned, 8.55)

Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, October 16th, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Chip Boyle Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

Metacomet Land Trust is having its Anniversary Celebration on November 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Elks Club in Franklin.

Chip will be working on the OS Website

Rick Holmes will be asked to e-mail the checklist around for evaluation.

CPC turned down the Town Hall renovation project proposal because it would effectively bankrupt the fund

No new news on Sweetwilliam Farn. Gail Hatrrington is still working on an an engineering plan-Mark Allen is the engineer. Next step would be to get an appraisal with money from the CPC. we need to figure out what area is to be under a conservation restriction.

Hope to get the Open Space and Recreation Plan draft done by years end.

House on Elm Street still needs to be removed.

Possible outings: December at Former Stefans Farm Parcel; January- Goss Pond bog walk; April –the gorge at Peppercorn Hill

Marcella will ask Debbie Sexton about storage of Open Space materials and keys for weekend access to do GIS work.

Meeting adjourned at 8.40

Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, November 20, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

Sweetwilliam Farm update: Gail Harrington has approached abutters Ellen and Russ Arnold about access to east end of her land via Ridge Road.

Peppercorn in-holding negotiations are still on hold.

Miscoe Hill parcel is still not off the table as access may be possible through Mendon.

Purchase of land will be a greater challenge since funds are scarce and more organizations are scrambling for grant money.

Recent open space purchase by the Town of Grafton of Pell property has the potential to link Warren Brook Watershed CA with Former Stefans Farm Parcel into a larger loop trail that could be especially nice for horseback riders. There is a need to negotiate with a private property owner to create legal access through a small stretch of private land. Marcella will look into making contact with Grafton Land Trust and see if they have a detailed trail map of the area. Will also see who the property owner is with whom to talk about an easement.

Meeting adjourned at 8.30

Meeting Minutes, Upton Open Space Committee, December 18th, 2008, 7.30 pm

Members present:

Rick Holmes Mike Penko Marcella Stasa

Sweetwilliam Farm update: According to Sudbury Valley Trust the abutting neighbors are not going to be involved in a possible development.

Mike expects to have the Open Space and Recreation Plan by the January meeting.

There is discussion over the Richards property behind the three lots being developed by Mr. Afonso on West River Road. It is 30 acres +-. The Recreation Commission wants to put CPA funds into it. Projects there could be rejected by Natural Heritage because it is turtle habitat. The Richards' were going to sell land for a well field and now wish to sell off more land

Marcella is working with Ellen Arnold of the Friends of Upton State Forest to plan some walks to tie in with Upton's 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Mike reported that the fuel wood lottery is closed out and all the wood has now been distributed. We should do it again. Recipients were pleased to have the wood and it generated good will.

Mike suggested we work on a forest management plan and perhaps hire a professional forester to look at some of Upton's open space parcels. We might check if there are damaged or downed trees.

Upcoming walks:

Late January-bog walk. - assuming it is cold enough for the bogs to freeze February- Peppercorn Gorge March- Big Night – perhaps Tom will present a vernal pool talk.

Rick asked if the soccer field on North Street is going forward or not. It seems that the Recreation Commission and Planning Board didn't move fast enough with Pulte. Maybe the Rec Com will consider the less expensive option of a fitness trail. Poirer property seems like the best place to site a recreation complex.

Mike noted a number of possible additional open space parcels: Sweetwilliam Farm-self help grant possible Peppercorn hill in-holdings -self help grant possible Westborough Road Miscoe Hill Kent property Rick asked about the Amato land. It seems to be in flux again. The over 55 development is not going forward and there has been no more word regarding a possible adult fitness complex. Kevin Lobissier may want to negotiate something. OS would still have access but it would be good to acquire the land.

Rick reported that CPA policies are being negotiated. Mike feels that recreation and open space should be separate (affordable housing and historic being the other two categories).

A goal is to do a land acquisition project for 2009. No word on North St- Drew Rogers project and the Open Space Plan. Rick asked about the fields on Christian Hill Road. We should pay attention to all chapter 61 parcels.

Mike asked if it is possible to use CPA funds to purchase a conservation restriction for the Former Stefans Farm Parcel. Rick thought it would be a way to put cash in the town coffers, but it might be suspect. Mike's thinking was that we might protect he parcel by doing so.

Marcella will make sure meetings through June 2009 are posted.

Meeting adjourned at 8.40