

## **MINUTES OF THE OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 23, 2004**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Robert J. Tashjian, Barbara Wyatt, Betsy DeMallie, Thomas Halpin, Mike Peckar, and Karen Pare.

**GUEST SPEAKER:** James M. French, Land Acquisition Coordinator, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Watershed Management, Field Headquarters, 180 Beaman Street, West Boylston, MA. 01583.

The Chairman, Dr. Tashjian, called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

**Minutes:** In accordance with the minutes of the March 17, 2004 meeting, Dr. Tashjian has prepared the minutes of this meeting as Secretary Pro Tem.

**Officers of the Open Space Advisory Committee:** Dr. Robert J. Tashjian was unanimously elected Chairman and Mr. Mike Peckar was unanimously elected Vice Chairman. The third position of Secretary was not filled since there were no volunteers for the position, and as a result the required minutes are prepared by volunteers from the committee as Secretary Pro Tem.

**Recording of minutes:** The Open Space Advisory Committee is a recognized official committee of West Boylston. It does not report to the Town Wide Planning Committee as did the Open Space Committee for the West Boylston Master Plan. The committee reports directly to the Selectman through the Town Administrator. As a Municipal Committee, minutes of meetings are required. The following suggested protocol was prepared by Karen Pare similar to the protocol of the Planning Board:

1. Minutes are taken at meeting "A". They are written up and circulated to the members of the board before the next meeting ("B")
2. At meeting "B", the minutes are amended if necessary. Then a motion is made to either "accept the minutes of the meeting of...as amended" or "accept the minutes of the meeting of ...as written". The motion is seconded and voted on by the board.
3. The final copy of the minutes is published on letterhead. This copy is signed by the Clerk on the board – usually at meeting "C". A copy of the signed final minutes is given to the Town Clerk.

**Presentation by Mr. James French:**

Mr. French is a highly competent and dedicated conservationist and environmentalist. He is extremely knowledgeable on wetlands and the justification of protection of public water supplies.

Jim opened with an overview of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs statewide land and protection plan – produced the map of the state showing priority areas as determined by “stacking” the various criteria adopted by state agencies and land trusts (both local and regional). The map makes clear by a glance that West Boylston is on the western fringe of the most menacing Greater Boston suburban sprawl. Our part of the state is clearly a priority - particularly due to the needs to maintain an aggressive land protection program for the Wachusett Reservoir watershed. A second map, Living Waters, was shown illustrating a statewide effort to identify critical wetland and riverine habitats worthy of special attention vis-à-vis land protection. And a publication entitled *Preserving Our Quality of Life: A Conservation Vision for Massachusetts* was handed out to members present.

It was explained that we are a 5 million acre state with a population of 6 million people (the population of the 12 colonies in 1778). The increasing strain on our land base and resources is taxing our ability to maintain a quality lifestyle which can only be secured by our success in providing for, and adequately protecting, our natural ecosystems. Each town must do what it can to protect its land base – by working in consort with the commonwealth, with land trusts, with local boards, and with individual landowners.

There was some discussion regarding the history of MDC land acquisition within the town and watershed, and the differences between fee acquisition and conservation restrictions. Some brainstorming on land protection strategies and varying funding sources took place. Jim related some Sterling Land Trust (he is current president of SLT) stories of survival and woe.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned about 9:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Date accepted: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Robert J. Tashjian, V.M.D., Secretary Pro Tem