

July 20, 2006
Minutes of the Meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee
Town of West Boylston, Massachusetts

ATTENDANCE: Chair: Dr. Robert Tashjian
 Vice-Chair: Michael Peckar
 Secretary: Maryellen Brown
 Barbara Wyatt
 James Edmundson

Sterling Open Space Committee:

 Chair: Robert Spencer
 Vice-Chair: Brian Cline
 Secretary: Marion Larson
 Treasurer: Maryanne MacLeod
 Robert Protano
 Peder C. Pederson

AGENDA: Sterling Fair Preparation

Call to order at 7:11 P.M.

RT welcomes all attendees, especially the Sterling Open Space Committee.

BC introduces members of the Sterling Open Space Committee.

RT introduces the new members of the West Boylston Open Space Committee, Jim Edmundson and Maryellen Brown. One member Lawrence Caron is now deceased,

JE describes his 27 year career in Alaska in the Fisheries and Wildlife Department, involving research of fisheries and water resources, and is now pursuing his doctorate at the University of Victoria. Elaborates on his experience in collaboration with other agencies and writing grant applications, as well as technical reports and peer review reports for the purpose of obtaining soft money. He describes a 10 year research program for which he obtained funding of 10 million dollars. He just returned to Massachusetts in December 2005 and to West Boylston on December 25, 2005.

RT states that the mission of the WBOSAC is to have a cohesive committee to look to the future needs of the town. There is a need for a broader mission; the plan for West Boylston taken to a national level. It is a unique plan with a strong base. The vision of the WBOSAC is public health and the preservation of our land and waters. Farms are different now than many years ago, there is really little classic agriculture anymore. This brings the consideration of the OSAC to public health and the preservation of water and land. Farm animals serve as sentinels against biological and chemical terrorism which involves veterinary medicine, so a symbiotic relationship is evolved from this. Agriculture presents as a method by which to preserve small parcels of land, maintain the environment, and focus on public health. Has met with public health

officials from Worcester with positive results. There are now 74 Massachusetts communities tied into concerns of bioterrorism and open space preservation. Also, the WBOSAC must revise its plan next year, we will do so in a more creative and unique way.

7:26 P.M. – Peder C. Pederson enters

RT turns to the subject of the Sterling Fair. Time is very short, need to focus on our options. How big do we want it to be? We have a large tent which could be used to house tractors, farm equipment and possibly animals. Would like to make a big presentation, and will be able to show political support. Want to work with SOSAC, we work well together.

BC states that the initiatives re: bioterrorism taken by Dr. Tashjian, while admirable, are not something which SOSAC would be familiar with and cannot speak to that. However, he agrees with the need for participation, and states that brochures are simply not effective. Too much information confuses the public. We need active participants this year.

RT agrees and states that we need organized fair booth coverage.

BC suggests the use of a picnic table where lemonade could be served and where people can sit and talk 1 on 1 to Committee members about our mission/goals. The mission is to educate the public.

7:36 P.M. – Robert Spencer and Maryanne MacLeod

RT: Agriculture is perceived as farming, but it really impacts public health and the environment. WBOSAC is developing a focus on agriculture for the Sterling Fair and wants to preserve the bond between WBOSAC and SOSAC.

MP states that last year the tractors were a great draw, as well as the taxidermy exhibits.

MMmacL states that for joint success we must concentrate on mutual aspects. Agricultural tradition and landscaping vs. community needs. Must listen to the public and find out what is important to them so we can work accordingly for the towns' purposes. Use the revision plan as a starting point, find common ground with the public. Issues of public health will only confuse Sterling people. Focus on the revision of the plan, i.e., gather information. States there will be new maps of the towns showing the location of endangered/rare species. They are printing in early September and will be brought to the fair. Also have bio/living waters maps to cultivate interest.

PP states that the committees can do complementary things, but we need to decide on the focus. Talking may not accomplish this. Focus on what could be developed, work on unique places to bring the public interest and get public opinion.

BC states that we must convince residents that this is important. The fair is chance to educate public on the meaning of "open space", i.e. the protection and future vision of land, its historic significance, wildlife habitats. All public opinion/perspective should be catalogued.

PP believes this would be a nice exercise for the planning of future activities.

BC states that people need to know this information, it is an educational process.

MMacL states that people need to engage in an activity, to welcome and draw in the public. Also helps with traffic flow. Maybe a tractor which can be climbed on.

RT states that is why we want to use the large tents this year. All these items can be inside to draw people in. We may also have a country band to play music.

MMacL states that the committees must work together to bring the focus where we want it.

RT states that we need committee members there at all times.

RP states that there were too many brochures last year. Agriculture is important, and we need to bring this home to people. Perhaps games/activities with a prize?

BC suggests having children identify various garden plants, or saplings, for a prize.

MMacL states that children could draw pictures of their favorite wildlife, breeds of cattle. Matching games perhaps?

RP states that we only have 6 weeks. Need to keep the theme in front of the public. What are we bringing to interest people? Need a real theme. What message do we want to give, we need to be specific. There was too much confusion last year. What do we want them to take away from the booth?

BC states that all volunteers should be able to answer questions discussed in the brochure.

RP states that people are really interested in bears right now. Perhaps a video of bears? Something along those lines.

BDeM states keep it simple and attractive.

RS states that volunteers are not sufficient.

PP states that we must define what it is all about. Ask people what is of value to them, i.e., hiking, scenery, fishing, etc.

BC states that we only have limited time and don't want to give the wrong impression. We can use animals to draw in children, and parents follow the children. If too much, focus will be lost.

MP states that we must focus on ourselves and our organizations. Need to reach out to the public so they reach back and get the message, all as described in the OS plan. Need to focus on that.

RT states that the plan will be our foundation, and the mission is public outreach. Preservation of agriculture. Suggest a new brochure jointly authored by West Boylston and Sterling OSACs. We will keep “Land and Waters That We Love” as our theme.

MMacL asks what will we actually present at the fair? Suggest that people who correctly answer OSAC questions should win a prize. Give an idea what the towns have to offer in terms of open space. Can be fun and educational. Then people will have an idea of the resources located in their own town that they never knew were there.

BC suggests having pictures of various farms and having people name them, or to identify a picture of open space in their towns, including farms, trails, streams.

PP especially areas accessible to the public, i.e., the rail trail. This could lead to productive discussion. Suggests area maps and aerial photographs to illustrate. We should be talking about what people don't already know, educate them re: open spaces in their towns. Athletic fields are all well and good, but are not our focus. Need to tell people about open space and the need for more in both towns.

RT theme is not considered a boundary of the exhibit. Will interact with other committees. Too many groups can get confusing, but we can return to that.

MMacL again states the need for activities to keep people in the tents.

RS states that they gave out tree seedlings at Earth Day this year, it was inexpensive. Could give to people for participation in activities.

RT agrees this should be enough.

RS states we have the open space maps which could be displayed.

PP as long as it engages the people in conversation. Perhaps use the maps as puzzles.

ML states that this would be a help to other towns revising their OS plans.

BC states that he has some great aerial images he could bring to display.

PP agrees and states the pictures could be used for people to identify their own homes and neighborhoods and see what open spaces are near them.

MMacL agrees that the goal is to educate the public about our mission.

MP suggests placing a mission summary on display with bulleted points for easy reading.

BC states that the aerial images are engaging and will draw people in. Teach them the 1st step, to appreciate what we have. Education will make this appreciation increase and create a cascade effect.

RT states must emphasize that mission is more than recreation/scenic beauty. Must focus on public health and environment. This vision is very important.

PP states we must have an area to draw people in and engage them in conversation. Compile notes of these conversations for future use and education.

BC agrees, human interaction is foremost.

RP has 2 picnic tables which he will bring to the fair and set up.

MM suggests displays of flora/fauna, i.e., what a tree does for you, what a field does for you, impact on emotional and physical health of public.

JE states that we know what open space is, we don't want people just like us. There are 2 camps, one is favorable and one is resistant to development of land. Must educate the value of clean air and water, i.e., the cost of lettuce from California to your table. Oil, manpower, etc. drive up costs to public. Would help people to refocus their perception of open space.

MM asks how we can convey the value of a field (land trust value)

RS states that we can demonstrate how open space pays for itself as opposed to residential development. We can bring that message out.

BC states that we need this data, it is key. People don't believe that open space costs them less than residential development.

RP states that getting them into the booth is the main objective.

BW adds that Umass did some research into this, we could use to supplement our theme "Land and Waters That We Love" and that we need.

MP states that we must also present the MDC as a friend not foe, make people understand its purpose.

MMacL agrees we must acknowledge MDC's valuable points, but reiterates that we must decide what we want to accomplish at the Sterling Fair..time of the essence.

RESOLVED:

Exhibit will be a definition of open space.

We will display maps and aerial photographs, and have games and activities.

We will have Q&A sessions/discussions

We should use seedlings for prizes, and Bob will obtain apples and apple chart also.

We must jointly work on brochure. Dr. Tashjian, Maryanne and Jim will work on this.

We will use two adjacent tents (20 x 22). Bob Spencer and Maryanne will take care of the tents. Mike, Brian and Bob will put up tents and take them down.

Maryanne will take care of fair space/rental fees.

Tables will be handled by Brian and Mike.

West Boylston OSAC through the Malden Brook Farm Heritage Center will do fundraising. Maryellen and Jim to work on that, with backup from Mike Peckar and the Land Trust, as they will help to pay the fee. Any sponsors will be entitled to tent space.

We will have another joint meeting on **Thursday, August 3, 2006.**

The agenda for this meeting will be to configure the layout of the tents, review maps and aerial photos, and the brochure draft.

WHEREBY the meeting concluded at 9:06 PM.

Maryellen Brown, Secretary

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