

West Boylston Open Space Advisory Meeting
Mixer Municipal Building
Town of West Boylston, MA
Selectman's Room
Thursday, November 16, 2006
Minutes of the Meeting

ATTENDANCE:	Chair:	Dr. Robert Tashjian	(RT)
	Secretary:	Maryellen Brown	(MB)
	Member	Barbara Wyatt	(BW)
	Member	James Edmundson	(JE)
	Chief of Police	Dennis Minnich,	DM)
	Recording Secretary	Jin Zhang	(JZ)

AGENDA Item 1:

Call to order at 7:35 P.M.

RT welcomed all attendees and noted that Jin Zhang a staff member of the American Veterinary Medical Frontiers (AVMF) will be digitally recording the meeting to supplement the written minutes.

RT introduced and thanked Chief of Police Dennis Minnich for attending the meeting and his support and understanding are integral for the OSAC plan and revision, as well as other long term goals to be addressed in tonight's meeting.

AGENDA Item 2:

Approval of minutes of last meeting October 19, 2006.

BW requested time to review the minutes.

WHEREFORE it was moved and seconded that this item will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

AGENDA Item 3:

Review and approval of Jim Edmundson's draft letter to the West Boylston Water District

RT stated JE prepared an excellent letter to the town's Water District re: the issues referenced at the October 19, 2006 meeting of the Committee.

RT reviewed the importance of the Water District as an ally.

BW indicated that we should be open to a mutual exchange of information and data between the OSAC and the Water District, would be beneficial to both.

RT agreed and indicated that representatives of the Water District will be invited to attend a future OSAC meeting.

WHEREFORE, it was unanimously agreed that language regarding the mutual exchange of information and data with the Water District be included in the letter drafted by Jim Edmundson, at which time the letter will be forwarded to the Water District.

AGENDA Item 4:

5 year OSAC plan must be completed in 1 year;

Open space representing over 500 acres on Prospect Street between Franklin & Parker Streets.

RT stated that Chief Minnich is knowledgeable with regard to the Letter of Intent which has been a work in progress, and is also very familiar with this 500 acres of open space. This land is vital to the town's health (environmental and animal) and safety. OSAC can spearhead action to bring this land to the town's attention. The land is now owned by MDC, Wachusett Country Club, the Town Water District and Malden Brook Farms. All of these groups must be unified for any effort to succeed so that land does not get splintered off. Priority must be public health and safety. If this land is developed, the town will change. It is in our hands now and we must keep on track, the OSAC plan revision must include a provision for this land. Focus on fostering a good relationship with the respective owners to reach this goal. The dam the MDC is interested in is the one on Carroll Pond, because there is a fear of flooding. These are sensitive issues. This includes possible increase in surface water flow and the dam does not have the capacity to handle it.

RT states that due to the above, the Citizens Organized for a Planned Environment (COPE) group should be activated, as it has been successful in the past.

BW: should encourage the responsible groups to take responsibility for the runoff from I-190, but due to politics and red tape this is virtually impossible.

RT emphasized that *the 500 acres represents the "final frontier" for West Boylston*. Malden Brook Farm is the foothold, and if that were lost, the town would change significantly, it is vital to the town's future. But we cannot do it alone, we need citizens' action, therefore, reestablish COPE.

DM: politicians do not want to step up to the plate and admit their errors, but 500+ contiguous acres is ripe for protection. COPE is a known "loud voice", there should be a meeting between COPE and congressmen, senators, etc. so as to assure project funding.

JE agrees this is a key element.

DM: negative publicity can sometimes help.

RT: Since few outside of West Boylston care about the town, we must use the land to draw attention here. About 135 acres is owned by the country club, the family does not seem inclined to sell off. Need ways to raise money independent from the town taxes. The town does not have the money to fund.

AGENDA Item 5:**National Model for Emergency Preparedness and Response**

As to the Letter of Intent and the corresponding project, RT has huge documented political support. We don't want controversy like Tufts and the bio-containment lab has in Grafton. West Boylston has ideal facilities to handle possible biological/chemical contamination in terms of preparedness and response. Chief Minnich is key figure for town safety, his support here is vital. We have animal sentinels as an early warning system. This enhances the town's value, i.e., increased public health and safety so as to avoid a "Katrina" type situations here. Emergency services a factor.

AGENDA Item 6:**Strategic plan, Phase 1**

RT would like to implement the plan in 3 phases. I-190 borders both the farm and the access road, could be used for emergency helicopter landings, etc. Emphasis should be on preparedness and response and not research. West Boylston could become a national model, we have already made positive contacts with the University of Pennsylvania and with the University of Massachusetts. Three MDs from Umass have written letters of support for the project. West Boylston will focus on the animal aspect, Umass the human aspect. The National Institutes of Health have been supplying various items including an ambulance. Phase 1 would incorporate these items, and RT would like to implement as soon as possible, even without an available helicopter.

DM stated that as Chief of Police, the location is perfect in terms of public safety should disaster occur, as it has no negative impact on the town. Agrees that the town could serve as a national model, including all emergency services, police, fire, etc. In fact, it is as perfect as you can get. Implementation of plan is only common sense, it is the right time and place. If it were bad for the town, he would object, however, this is not the case as he cannot think of anything negative as regards plan implementation.

AGENDA Item 7:**AVMF Divisions**

RT stated that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) program in which American Veterinary Medical Frontiers, Inc, (AVMF) and its divisions are involved would provide ongoing funding. Also farm can provide study into naturally occurring disasters and not be a test situation. RT suggested that COPE become another division of AVMF.

AGENDA Item 8:**Historical COPE**

RT: in terms of COPE, it can be made a division of AVMF. In the past, over 100 citizens became actively involved in COPE to protect the land that MDC later purchased. There is also

concern for the 7.5 acres next to the MDC field on Prospect Street due to high levels of botulism soil spores.

AGENDA Item 9:
COPE

Discussion was held as to the positive and negative aspects of publicity with COPE. Don't want too much publicity, but need to be somewhat aggressive. Discussion also held on the timing for the implementation of COPE, too soon is not good, but cannot wait too long. Issues must be defined and presented.

AGENDA Items 10 & 11:
DCR policy for 500+ acres on Prospect Street/Publicity

DM stated that publicity can be a double edged sword dependent upon the reporter, some are more trustworthy than others. But the right type of publicity would go far and fast, could be picked up by the AP. Publicity needed to proceed.

RT mentioned that the story would become exaggerated to our detriment, how to control this? Maybe start with a smaller group before implement COPE?

DM indicated that we have to be particular in how we control the media.

JE stated that the key is "Why West Boylston?" Must explain the significance of the plan and why West Boylston is unique in this regard. JE offered to draft an article explaining to the public that it will offer teaching/educational facilities, the opportunity to protect the public, explaining the initiative for the project is to protect human health, make it a friendly by using local people in support.

DM mentioned that American Airlines pilot Jim O'Loughlin, especially since he was a close friend of the deceased American Airlines pilot, John Ogonowski who was forced to fly into the Twin Towers on 9/11 would be perfect for an easy and friendly introduction to the subject.

JE stated that the article should tag the 500+ acres as a large plot vs. many small plots as a tool for public health and safety. Would like to try to draft this article. No reason to wait to get something out there, we don't want our ideas stolen, but we can get ahead of the game this way. Not too early to get some positive publicity and assuage questions and suspicions. See what stakeholders come to the plate. Can use Jim O'Loughlin as a prime example.

MB suggested a periodic newsletter be sent to the stakeholders to keep them up to speed.

JE agreed, can send progress reports to stakeholders. Should it come from OSAC or from the Town?

RT: OSAC should be the originator.

DM stated that if we can get citizen support, this would offset any potential conflict of interest on the part of RT as a stakeholder. Must be in the form of an article to be sent to newspapers and reporters which are trusted to incorporate the article properly, must tell them our requirements. Should be sent to the Banner, and if that gets positive feedback, then the T&G would run it.

RT stated that the Banner has been good for the group, and they are owned by the T&G, who in turn is owned by the NY Times.

WHEREFORE it was moved and seconded that Jim Edmundson will draft the above described article for the Committee's approval at the next meeting.

AGENDA Item 12:

Not specifically addressed.

AGENDA Item 13:

The next meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee will be on **Thursday, December 14, 2006 at 7:30 PM.**

AGENDA Item 14:

Other business

BW stated that the DCR scheduled a meeting on 11/17/06 regarding the issue of the construction of rental housing units at Franklin Street and Route 12. Could JE attend it?

JE said he will try to attend this meeting

WHEREBY the meeting was adjourned at 9:17 PM.

Maryellen Brown, Secretary