

**Town of West Boylston  
Open Space Advisory Committee  
Mixer Municipal Building  
120 Prescott Street  
West Boylston, MA 01583**

**Minutes: Thursday, 10 May 2007 at 7:00 p.m.**

Advisory Committee Members present: Dr. Robert Tashjian (Chair), Barbara Wyatt, Brenda Bowman, Jim Edmundson. Absent were Mike Peckar and Carol Cotter.

Others present: as per sign-in sheet (14 in attendance).

Call to Order and Opening Comments: The meeting was called to order by Dr. Robert Tashjian at 7:20 p.m., with a 4 member quorum present. Dr. Tashjian began the meeting by introducing the committee members and distributing copies of the meeting agenda to the attendees. He indicated the committee would not be discussing item #4 on the agenda because there was no new information to discuss regarding the proposed 40B project at 19 Crescent Street.

Approval of Minutes of last meeting 23 April 2007: At this point, Dr. Tashjian explained that the minutes of the last committee meeting were not yet finalized because committee member Maryellen Brown (note taker) had recently resigned as committee secretary. Dr. Tashjian then asked if a motion to approve the minutes of the April meeting be postponed until the next (June) meeting. The committee unanimously agreed.

AVMF Strategic Master Plan and relationship to the revised West Boylston Open Space and Recreation Plan: Dr. Tashjian began by stating that West Boylston is now facing a critical crossroads of implementing the town's Master Plan which embraces full build-out potential of available lands and the need for preservation of open space to ensure public health. He said that "our town's future and destiny is open space" and that failure to protect adequate open space lands will negatively affect the quality of life and the future the town. Dr. Tashjian also stated that the need for open space goes far beyond scenic beauty and providing for recreational opportunities, and that open space is essential to ensure public safety, public health, animal health and environmental health.

That said, Dr. Tashjian recapped the history of the Open Space Sub-Committee and writing of the town's current Master Plan. During this process, he said he felt that there might be an alternative to the town's Master Plan that would enhance the town's infrastructure, provide additional revenue to the town to help decrease the property tax burden, boost public safety, and protect our town's drinking water supply. Dr. Tashjian then introduced his *Preliminary Strategic Master Plan: A Comprehensive National Model for Community Civil Defense: Including Biological Contamination, Preparedness and Response*. He pointed out that the Strategic Master Plan has been endorsed by several local officials, Board of Selectmen, state representatives, and Harvard University Medical School. In light of recent articles printed in the Worcester Telegram

and Gazette criticizing the Plan, Dr. Tashjian went on to explain that the newspaper misrepresented the purpose and benefits of the Strategic Master Plan. However, he did praise the Town Administrator for his supportive position in the same article stating that the town of West Boylston needs to be creative in terms of funding community services. Dr. Tashjian said that the Strategic Master Plan could help in such a creative manner.

Jim Edmundson added "What is the harm of having another plan being developed along with the current plan and have it available for the community to review?" He further stated that there were several elements of the plan that were directly relevant to the mission of the Open Space Advisory Committee. In particular, he underscored the part of the plan that deals with water quality protection in town, namely Malden Brook and its associated aquifer. Dr. Tashjian then explained that Interstate 190 crosses over the aquifer and thus there is a potential for truck tanker spills and subsequent release of chemicals, toxins or other contaminants into Malden Brook. Jim Edmundson went on to explain that as he understood it, the town receives more than ½ of its water supply from the Malden Brook aquifer. He said that given our current water conservation restrictions, if the Lee Street well, which taps this aquifer, becomes contaminated via some catastrophe or terrorist act, the town will face a dire environmental crisis. He further stated that the committee has identified approximately 500 acres of priority open space deemed the "final frontier" largely bordering Prospect Street that should be protected to ensure a clean and safe water supply for the town.

Jim Edmundson then explained that in addition to environmental benefits there is also an economic benefit to protect open space. He stated that many cost-benefit studies carried out in several communities in Massachusetts have shown that open space has a positive effect on nearby property values. He said that in addition to increasing local property value, thereby increasing property tax bases, open space provides tourism and recreational dollars and decreases local tax increases due to the savings of reducing the construction of new infrastructure such as schools, police, and road services. A discussion followed among the attendees about the relative value of residential, commercial and open space lands. A question was asked by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ about the cost of community services in Massachusetts studies. He wanted to know what the revenue-to-expenditure ratio in dollars by property type was for West Boylston. Jim Edmundson responded in saying that the committee did not yet know that answer, but that we were working on generating that information as part of our revised Open Space Plan.

Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ then arrived and asked to speak briefly at the meeting regarding the upcoming Town Meeting and the Proposition 2 ½ override. She began distributing a packet of information to the attendees. Attendees were very receptive to listen to her presentation.

In keeping with the rules of order of the committee meeting, Dr. Tashjian asked the committee members if the meeting should be adjourned. The committee unanimously agreed. At this point the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:05 p.m.

Prepared: Jim A. Edmundson  
06/18/2007