

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

**Minutes: Thursday, 21 June 2007 at 6:30 p.m.**

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

Others present: Leon Gaumond (Town Administrator), Chief Minnich (Chief of West Boylston Police), Brian CLine (Chair/Sterling Open Space Advisory Committee), Dr. Gregory Ciottone (Director, International Emergency Medicine Section, Harvard Medical School).

Call to Order and Opening Comments: The meeting was called to order by Dr. Robert Tashjian at 6:35 p.m., with a 5 member quorum present. Dr. Tashjian began the meeting by introducing the committee members, town officials and guest speaker, Dr. Ciottone and suggested an agenda change: that further committee business be postponed until after a talk from guest speaker Dr. Ciottone. The committee unanimously agreed.

Significance of Open Space in West Boylston (Dr. Ciottone): Dr. Tashjian explained that Dr. Ciottone is recognized worldwide as a leading authority in the field of disaster medicine and management. Dr. Ciottone is the editor-in-chief of the brand-new reference *Disaster Medicine*. Dr. Tashjian stated that Dr. Ciottone recognizes the value of open space and that he could help the committee move forward with its mission/tasks.

Dr. Ciottone began by describing his roots in West Boylston and working relationship with Dr. Tashjian with respect to disaster medicine and disaster preparedness. He stated that West Boylston is rather unique in still having large areas of open space which can be utilized in disaster medicine training. Dr. Ciottone raised the question as to whether a small town like West Boylston should prepare for destructive natural disasters or bioterrorism. While such catastrophes might seem remote, he explained that pandemic avian flu is a real threat to communities nationwide. He gave an example of disaster statistics (pandemic flu) for Westboro, MA. In 1918, 48% of the town's population contracted the flu virus, 10% of the population died, and schools were cancelled for 10 weeks. If these statistics were applied to Boston, one million residents would be sick today and 100,000 could die. Dr. Ciottone went on to say that at that disaster level, our health care system would be overwhelmed and all services would be intensive care. While large cities like Boston could utilize colleges and dormitories for general health care, such infrastructure does not exist in towns like West Boylston. Dr. Ciottone also explained that West Boylston can create capability to accommodate primary health care (in case of disaster) in new municipal buildings and these buildings could still function primarily as general municipal buildings. He pointed out that this idea is core to Dr. Tashjian's *Strategic Plan* for West Boylston.

Dr. Ciottone further explained that West Boylston is unique because of the Wachusett Reservoir and that such a water body represents a potential threat, albeit remote, for deliberate contamination. However, he also said that pandemic flu can originate not only via waterbodies, but from commercial aircraft and migratory birds. Birds carrying the flu virus could enter the reservoir. As such, he explained that the reservoir could serve as an early detection environment. Dr. Tashjian and Jim Edmundson pointed out that monitoring of waterways and use of sentinel animals is central to the *Strategic Plan*.

Dr. Ciottone praised Dr. Tashjian for trying to keep open space and benefit the town (both in terms of services and infrastructure); however, he felt Dr. Tashjian's *Strategic Plan* would be difficult to fund because it is an unsolicited proposal. Rather, Dr. Ciottone stated that it might be possible to keep open space, but use it in a functional way that supports itself; i.e., use it in operational medicine for training in austere environments and rough terrain. This space would be used for tactical training. In addition to medical personnel, he indicated that the State Police are supportive of this idea. He went on to say that there is an acute need for training in austere medical care. In doing so, this venture would help keep the beauty of open space. Dr. Ciottone explained that Harvard Medical School could be the lead organization to obtain funding for training on open space parcels of the Malden Brook Heritage Farm and American Veterinary Medical Frontiers Inc. in West Boylston.

Dr. Tashjian stated that without this kind of disaster preparedness, it would be difficult to control the community in the face of natural disasters or bioterrorism. Barbara Wyatt said that West Boylston should be a model community for disaster preparedness. Jim Edmundson asked Dr. Ciottone how Harvard Medical School would actually protect open space. Dr. Ciottone responded by saying that they would develop a training facility on the property. Jim Edmundson told the committee that developing such a facility is essentially Phase I of the *Strategic Plan*. Chief Minnich responded by saying that by developing the disaster training facility in West Boylston along with the Harvard team, other elements of the Strategic Plan "would blossom". Leon Gaumond asked if austere training was part of the current *Strategic Plan* and expressed his support of the training program/facility.

Dr. Ciottone indicated that Harvard would be looking for request for proposal funding opportunities in the fall to coincide with the federal fiscal cycle. He suggested that two elements, *biosurveillance* and *operational medicine* would need to be fleshed out in detail in the grant writing process. Leon Gaumond stated that "austere training" is the key element for the town and the town's cooperation and involvement. He said the town would be very supportive of this piece of the *Strategic Plan*. Barbara Wyatt asked Dr. Ciottone if the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority was currently providing water quality surveillance on the Wachusett reservoir. Dr. Ciottone said "yes" to some degree. With no further questions from the committee, Dr. Ciottone left the meeting and 7:30 PM. Leon Gaumond then told the committee that he agreed with Dr. Ciottone that our public health system is unprepared for an major catastrophe. Dr. Tashjian suggested the committee proceed with regular business.

Approval of Minutes of last meeting 10 May 2007: At this point, Dr. Tashjian asked if a motion to approve the minutes of the May meeting be postponed until the next (July) meeting. A motion was made, seconded and he committee unanimously agreed.

Recommendation for Jim Edmundson to be Vice Chairman of West Boylston Open Space Committee: Dr. Tashjian recommended Jim Edmundson to be Vice Chairman of the committee. The committee unanimously agreed.

Membership of West Boylston Open Space Committee: Dr. Tashjian established the current membership of the committee: Dr. Taashjian (Chair), Jim Edmundson (Vice Chair), Brenda Bowman, Barbary Wyatt, Carol Cotter.

Revision of Open Space Plan; Open Space and the Community Preservation Act: Leon Gaumond (Town Administrator) recommended Dr. Tashjian meet with the Planning Board about his *Strategic Plan*. Leon expressed his preference desire to have a draft revision of the town's Open Space Plan in hand by the end of September (2007), but would concede to December (2007) if necessary. He also indicated that West Boylston may establish an Agricultural Commission, which would interact with the Open Space Committee. As to the Community Preservation Act (CPA), he stated that the CPA passed by a slim margin. He went on to explain the CPA statute and that he is in the process of creating a CPA committee to recommend how funds are expended. Leon also reiterated that it is the voters at Town Meeting dictate dispersion of CPA funds. Dr. Tashjian expressed his concern about the CPA Commission becoming a grantor for special interests groups. Leon Gaumond replied that CPA efforts should be different and separated from the *Strategic Plan* and the Harvard involvement. Brian Cline explained that there is much flexibility in what CPA funds can be used for and that a town can be quite creative in its spending. Leon Gaumond recommended that the Open Space Committee submit a name to sit on the CPA Committee. He informed the committee that the deadline to request a seat on the CPA Committee is 29 June 2007 and that there were 4 seats to be filled. Brenda Bowman expressed interest in becoming a member of the CPA Committee.

Adjournment: At this point, the West Boylston Open Space Advisory Committee meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:05 p.m.

**(continued below)**

***West Boylston & Sterling***  
***Open Space Implementation Committee***  
***Joint Regional Meeting***

**Mixer Municipal Building**  
**120 Prescott Street**  
**West Boylston, MA 01583**

**Minutes: Thursday, 21 June 2007 at 7:30 p.m.**

Advisory Committee Members present: Brian Cline (Chair), Dr. Robert Tashjian (Co-Chair), Barbara Wyatt, Brenda Bowman, and Jim Edmundson

Call to Order and Opening Comments: The meeting was called to order by co-Chair Dr. Robert Tashjian at 8:10 PM, with a 5 member quorum present.

Progress Reports since the Sterling Fair 2006; Sterling Fair 2007/Other Business: Brian Cline reported the date for the upcoming Sterling Fair as 08-09 September and Dr. Tashjian asked the joint committed whether West Boylston and Sterling would join efforts at this year's fair. Brian Cline questioned whether we had the resources to do this because of funding limitations and lack of personnel to staff the fair booth. His opinion was that the Sterling Open Space Committed was not inclined to participate in the fair this year, but that the West Boylston and Sterling should stay in communication and share ideas about how to revise their respective open space plans. A discussion followed among the committee members about the real merit of having a booth at the fair. Jim Edmundson favored putting the open space efforts into getting our message out about the fiscal value of open space. Dr. Tashjian agreed, stating that the West Boylston Open Space Committee should tune its efforts toward the Harvard connection. He also reiterated the need to keep the town involved.

Dr. Tashjian explained the article at last Town Meeting about the Board of Selectmen backing a plan to operate a waste transfer facility in town as a means of generating funds. Dr. Tashjian felt that the committee should take a formal position on the proposal. Jim Edmundson suggested that the committee write a letter to the Board outlining our position and both environmental and economic reasons against the proposal.

Brenda Bowman suggested that the open space committee should promote more public access on state owned (DCR/watershed) lands within the municipality such as the Lily Ponds. Dr. Tashjian and Jim Edmundson felt that use of sensitive watershed lands like the Lily Ponds would not be in the best interest of public health and safety.

Jim Edmundson asked the joint committee if we were participating in the upcoming Sterling fair or not. Dr. Tashjian responded that we should not attend the fair. Instead, he suggested we focus our efforts on other business including implementing Phase I of the *Strategic Plan*, revising the open space plan, and documenting our positions on the waste transfer facility proposal and various Chapter 40B projects that may impact open space.

Adjournment: Dr. Tashjian adjourned the meeting at 10:05 PM.

Prepared: Jim A. Edmundson  
07/24/2007