

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

**Minutes: Thursday, 27 September 2007 at 7:00 p.m.**

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

Others present: Mr. John Ownisian (Parks Facilities Committee).

Call to Order and Opening Comments: The meeting was called to order by Dr. Robert Tashjian at 7:08 p.m., with a 6 member quorum present. Dr. Tashjian announced that Jim Edmundson would be acting secretary for the meeting.

Review and Approval of Minutes of 30 August 2007 Meeting: Dr. Tashjian asked for a review of the 30 August 2007 meeting. Jim Edmundson stated that he had not yet prepared the minutes for the last meeting. Dr. Tashjian decided to take up the issue of past minutes at the next meeting. Jim Edmundson indicated he would have the past minutes distributed to the committee in advance of the next (October) meeting.

Discussion with the Parks Facilities Committee Re: WB Parks and the Revised Open Space & Recreation Plan: Dr. Tashjian began by introducing Mr. John Ownisian of the Parks Facilities Committee. Mr. Ownisian described the composition, history and overview of the Parks Facilities Committee. Specifically, he said that the committee was formed about a year ago in response to the closure of the town pool and lack of town playing (field) facilities. He stated that the town pool is beyond repair and the town recently lost the use of the men's softball field in Oakdale (because of DCR restrictions) and the and the youth soccer field. Mr. Ownisian stated that the current playing fields are heavily used, the high school needs new fields, and that the general consensus by the Parks Facilities Committee is that all the playing fields are overused. He also said that the total budget for parks is \$17,000/yr which includes a staff of two (9 months each). In addition to the deterioration of the playing fields, Mr. Ownisian described the crumbling condition of the tennis courts, the need for relining the track, and the lack of a town skating rink.

Mr. Ownisian stated that the Parks Facilities Committee has prioritized projects for the town planning committee. He said the first priority is top demolish the town pool and replace it with a smaller outdoor pool and a zero depth pool or sprinkler water park. Mr. Ownisian also said that the committee has applied for a state grant for funding for the project. The second priority is to build a new playing field behind the high school. The Parks facilities Committee has also applied for a grant to fund this project. The third priority for the committee is to obtain an

estimate for repairs to the tennis courts and associated drainage issues. There was discussion about what, if any, playing fields might be built in conjunction with a new Town Hall proposed for the Mixter Building site. In addition, we discussed the need for new playing fields near the high school given that the proposal for building a waste facility on Tivnan Drive also includes building new fields adjacent to the proposed facility. Dr. Tashjian asked Mr. Ownisian what acreage was required for the new fields. He also asked where and how much DCR land is the Parks Facilities Committee looking at to acquire for athletic/recreational use. Mr. Ownisian said that at this time he was unsure.

Carol Cotter asked what Mr. Ownisian meant about “crumbling infrastructure”. Mr. Ownisian responded by saying that preliminary estimates are that it would cost the town \$134,000 to replace the tennis courts and basketball courts, create adequate parking and lighting. He also stated that all necessary repairs building new playing field facilities would cost less than \$200,000. Dr. Tashjian felt that new capital costs should come after funds are available to repair and maintain existing athletic facilities. He posed the question “What is our 5-year plan in light of progressive deterioration and new capital costs”. Brenda Bowman suggested that the Parks Facilities Committee lay out a 5-year plan in more detail. Dr. Tashjian expressed his concern about trading DCR land for parks and recreation. Vince Vignaly responded by saying that DCR won’t just “give land away” .

Mr. Vignaly described his background as an environmental engineer with the Department of Conservation. He also described his 13 years work/experience with the Conservation Commission and his current involvement with the Town-wide Planning Board. Dr. Tashjian stated that Mr. Vignaly’s background and expertise is a great addition to the Open Space Committee.

Approval of Minutes of 10 May and 21 June 2007 meetings: After a review of the minutes, Barbara Wayatt moved that the minutes of both meetings be accepted. The motion was seconded and the minutes approved unanimously by committee. Jim Edmundson said he would file the minutes with the Town Clerk.

Review and discussion of 26 July 2007 meeting: Since a quorum was not present for the July meeting, Jim Edmundson suggested tabling discussion of the July “”meeting notes”. Dr. Tashjian agreed and the committee moved to the next agenda (#7) item.

Recommendation of a Member of the Open Space Committee to establish a WB Agricultural Commission: Jim Edmundson explained the Town Manager’s response to his interest in serving on the Agricultural Commission; i.e., that Mr. Gaumond (Town Administrator) would be introducing an article at the spring (2008) town meeting asking voters to establish an Ag. Comm. If accepted, he would then solicit names for the commission. Barbara Wyatt asked what does the town gain by creating an Agricultural Commission. Dr. Tashjian responded by saying that the town still has significant Chapter 61 lands that need to remain in agricultural use, therefore a commission to help foster and protect agricultural/farm lands is warranted. Vincent Vignaly added that most Chapter 61 lands are classified for recreation (48%) compared to that for

forestry (34%) and agriculture (18%). However, he acknowledged that he did not have the actual acreages at hand for the breakdown. Brenda Bowman asked how the town seeks to gain Chapter 61 designation for land parcels. Vincent responded stating that a property owner seeking to remove his/her property from one of the chapter programs, coincident with a sale or transfer of ownership, is required by law to notify the Town of its first option to acquire the property. Under current law, the town has right of first refusal to purchase Chapter 61 lands if the property is up for sale for conversion to another use. If no money is available to purchase such lands, Chapter 61 lands are subject to be sold to developers. However, once land is designated as Chapter 61 and after 20 years, the first right of refusal by the town disappears. The committee agreed that a member of the Open Space Committee should serve as a member of the Agricultural Commission since keeping lands in Chapter 61 programs helps protect critical open space.

Significance of Open Space for the “Prospect Street Sewer Aqueduct” Flooding With or Without Aquifer and Recharge Contamination: Dr. Tashjian explained that with the new sewer connections, water/sewer/runoff from the Wachusett Country Club and the Applewood subdivision is running underground along Prospect Street. He went on to say that the Peterson Farm (on Prospect Street near the I 190 overpass) has a position that I 190 runoff is overburdening the sewer system. Vincent Vignaly questioned whether this concern should be more of an issue with the Department of Public Works. Dr. Tashjian responded by saying that it should be an issue for the Open Space Committee because if the sewer breaks it would likely contaminate Malden Brook which is a significant source of water for the town. To add to the potential problem of an overburdened sewer system, Vincent also stated that the Board of Selectmen are interested in reducing the minimum building (residential) lot size from 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup> to 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> or 20,000ft<sup>2</sup>. Brenda Bowman asked where the flooding on Prospect Street occurs. Dr. Tashjian responded that it is around the pumping station near the Peterson and Malden Brook Farms. At this point in the discussion, Vincent and Brenda asked if there is a moa motion to do something about the issue. Dr. Tashjian suggested we should draft a letter to the Board of Selectmen about our concerns about flooding and contamination of our water supply.

AVMF Strategic Plan and the Relationship to the Revised West Boylston Open Space and Recreation Plan: Dr. Tashjian stated that the Open Space Committee was “under the gun” to revise the Open Space Plan. He described the history and background of developing the Plan and its key elements. He also explained how many of these elements would benefit the town, both in terms of bringing new capital for our crumbling infrastructure needs as well as bringing in funds that could be used for the police and fire departments. Vincent Vignaly suggested that the best move for the committee is to incorporate these ideas into the revised Open Space Plan. Jim Edmundson then discussed his ideas for blending the revised Open Space Plan and the AVMF Strategic Plan. He said that the revised plan could be organized into 4 main sections: (1) open space for public health and safety, (2) open space for animal health, (3) open space for environmental health, and (4) open space for recreation. Vincent further recommended that the committee prepare a letter to the Planning Board in support of the AVMF Strategic Plan.

There was additional discussion about the cost of community services and the revenue-to-expenditure ratio in dollars for West Boylston. Jim Edmundson cited the statistics from several studies around the state echoing the notion that open space saves money and helps stabilize

community budgets. Vincent Vignaly recommended that the revised Open Space Plan show the revenue-to-expenditure ratio for WB in comparison with other Massachusetts towns.

The discussion then shifted to local approval processes, local zoning, and other restrictions surrounding Chapter 40B affordable housing projects in the town. Vincent Vignaly explained the zoning regulations, site plan etc. for the Crescent Street Village project. He stated that the development is smaller than originally planned and would include 18 units and still leave some open space. He also recommended that the Open Space Committee prepare a position letter that recommends changing the 40B process.

Jim Edmundson then asked the committee what main issues are to be included in the revised Open Space Plan. He answered by suggesting (1) prioritizing the open space lands along Prospect Street from Crescent Street to Parker Street, (2) support and inclusion of elements of the AVMF Strategic Plans, (3) water problems and water quality protection for the town, and (4) involvement of the Open Space Committee in the Chapter 40B local approval process. Vincent then added that we also need to get the recreation plan and add that to our revised Open Space Plan. He said that the recreation plan has identified the ~7 acre parcel on Prospect Street for three soccer fields.

Town-Wide Planning Committee Meeting, 02 October 2007: Vincent Vignaly suggested that the Open Space Committee attend the 02 October meeting and ask the Town-Wide Planning Committee for assistance in preparing the revised Open Space Plan. Some of the members agreed to attend.

Adjournment: At this point, the West Boylston Open Space Advisory Committee meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:12 p.m.

*Prepared: Jim A. Edmundson 10/24/2007*