

**Town of West Boylston
Open Space Advisory Committee
Animal Medical Center/Conference Center
29 Prospect Street
West Boylston, MA 01583**

Minutes: Thursday, 15 May 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Advisory Committee Members present: Dr. Robert Tashjian (Chair), Brenda Bowman, Barbara Wyatt, Vincent Vignaly, and Jim Edmundson. .

Others Present: Ray Desanti, Brian Bjorklund.

Call to Order and Opening Comments: The meeting was called to order by Dr. Robert Tashjian at 7:15 p.m., with a 5 member quorum present. Dr. Tashjian announced that Jim Edmundson would be acting secretary for the meeting.

Review and Approval of 10 April 2008 Minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously with minor edits from Mr. Vignaly amendments. Vinny also reminded the committee those minutes from the January 17 2008 meeting had not yet been prepared. Jim Edmundson said he would prepare them for review at the next meeting..

Termination of Transfer Station and Open Space Relationship: Discussion ensued about the termination of the lease/negotiation process between the town and Bay Colony to develop the Tivnan Drive property for a waste transfer/recycling facility. The committee was relieved to hear that news. Brenda stated that surrounding towns are providing funds for a hazardous waste facility in West Boylston (on State-owned land); however, she also noted that so far West Boylston has not provided any funds. Vinny suggested that we write something about the hazardous waste facility in the revised open space plan and the committee agreed.

Sentinel Animals for the Detection of Natural or Manmade Outbreaks: Dr. Tashjian initiated discussion of using sentinel animals as part of an effective bio-defense system based in West Boylston. He articulated the crux of this plan by way of a two-page executive summary that the committee read and reviewed. In essence, the sentinel animal initiative is a grass-roots initiative designed to protect public health safety. Both wild (e.g., migratory birds) and domesticated animals (e.g., horses and cows) can serve as important sentinels in the event of biological contamination and pandemics (e.g., avian influenza). The long-range plan is to create a center for testing, maintaining and observing a variety of sentinel animals on the Malden Brook Farm. Given the farm's proximity to Wachusett Reservoir (drinking water for millions of people), West Boylston would be a strategically significant site for such a research station with a great potential for attracting grant monies that could help the town's fiscal situation, create local education opportunities, protect our dwindling open space, and safeguard human health. The committee unanimously supported this program.

Further Discussion on the Lee Street Parcel for Sale Adjacent to Water District Land: Jim Edmundson informed the committee that he still needs to write a letter from the Open Space Committee recommending that the town acquire this 4.5 acre parcel for further aquifer protection and as a good site for placing new wells for the town's drinking water supply. Vinny stated that the CPA committee has identified this parcel as a priority for purchase.

Continued Work on the Revised Open Space Plan/Discussions/Review: Vinny summarized the comments he received on the draft revised Open space plan from various committees and individuals. There was some discussion about the local debate of maintaining the Pine Grove behind the high school as open space or having it developed for athletic fields. Barbara suggested that the open space committee not address the issue in the revised plan unless the Parks Facility Committee provides the initial input. The committee agreed. Brenda then stated that she and Vinny attended the last Conservation Committee meeting and that committee was favorable to the revised plan to date. Barbara attended the Town-wide Planning Committee and she also indicated that they supported the revised plan. Because Brian and Ray were not yet appointed members of the open space committee, we discussed whether it was appropriate to include them as committee members in the revised plan (under section 2.B). The committee decided to wait until next meeting in order to await the Board of Selectmen's approval of new committee members.

Public Hearing: Vinny informed the committee that prior to a public hearing on the revised plan, a public notice must be placed in the newspaper. Barbara/Brenda suggested that we make copies of the plan available at the Beaman Library and also place a notice on WB public TV.

Adjournment: The committee agreed to meet on June 12 2008 at the Town Office for the required public hearing. At this point, the West Boylston Open Space Advisory Committee meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 p.m.

Prepared: Jim A. Edmundson 06/25/2008