

## Swanzy Open Space Committee

7/8/08 meeting minutes

*Minutes are not final until reviewed and approved by the Open Space Committee. Review and approval of minutes generally takes place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee.*

The meeting convened at 5:00 p.m.

**Attendance:** Victoria Barlow, Deb Crowder, Theresa DiLuzio, Katherine Feist, Bruce Tatro, Jeanne Thieme, Dan Zeh; Town Planner Sara Carbonneau.

Swanzy residents Suzanne Whittemore (MC Board) and Dave Krisch (OSC Advisory) also attended.

**Special guests Ryan Owens and Rebecca McGuire, Monadnock Conservancy (MC) (5:00 – 5:45)**  
Owens and McGuire reported on their July 2 meeting with Cynthia Richards and Barbara Brown. Richards had contacted Owens at the OSC's easement celebration party in April.

Richards is interested in conserving about 20 acres of her land, a portion of a larger parcel on Christian Hill Road, directly across the road from the forest her uncle, Gordon Brown, conserved with the New England Forestry Foundation some years ago. Richards and Brown would like to honor G. Brown's wish that land on both sides of the road be protected. The over 650 acres in west Swanzy owned by Richards and Brown include important river frontage and productive soils.

Regarding the balance of the Richards/Brown land, the group discussed ways to have an easement and still develop some land – through exclusions, reserved rights, etc. – should it become necessary to generate income. Owens described the option of easement purchase, at fair market value, as well as the donation of easements.

To Richards and Brown, Owens expressed reservations about the ability of the MC to commit to protection of so small a parcel at this time. He promised a firm answer in the near future.

---

To the OSC, Owens brought the following questions:

- Is the Christian Hill Road parcel important to the Town?
- Is it worth the Town paying the project costs?
- Could this easement be important strategically?
- Does the OSC/Town have the resources for a major fundraising campaign if Richards ever indicated she might be interested in a Town purchase?

Owens said that the number of projects currently in the MC "pipeline" would push any action on this potential project into 2009. Furthermore, if there were no likelihood of future protection of additional Richards/Brown acres, it would be hard for the MC to justify devoting limited resources to so small a project. However, Richards and Brown might be open to the idea of increasing the project size by also including river frontage/wetlands acres with much lower development potential.

OSC members agreed that protecting the +/- 20 acres on Christian Hill Road is important to the Town, and that, pending the positive results of a site walk and formal assessment, the Committee would endorse covering transaction costs. Owens roughly estimates transaction costs of the +/- 20-acre parcel to be in the \$4,000 - \$5,000 range; with the addition of wetlands/river frontage, the number would be in the \$10,000 - \$14,000 ballpark.

Members discussed possible fund-raising strategies should Richards and Brown become interested in a Town easement purchase of a large portion of the over 650 acres. Owens estimated that, at minimum, such an easement would cost in the “high six figures.” The Town would have to secure multiple sources of funding. The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program would be a legitimate source, and would require some amount of Town investment. LHCIP would be a possibility.

Owens explained that the Trust for Public Lands uses their expertise to find and raise money – typically, their role is to get a town in gear to pass a bond, and to lobby for State and Federal money. The Trust can function as a short-term landowner, but will do so only if there is a clear plan for buy-back. The Trust funds its activities from a percentage of the project cost.

Rather than gearing up for a large easement purchase, Owens advised the OSC that the Town might be better served, for less cost per number of acres protected, by pursuing and expanding upon the numerous donations that already have been initiated in Swanzey.

Carbonneau noted the limitations of the Town’s human resources, especially given the scope and volume of other activities to which the OSC has committed. DiLuzio said that an ambitious fundraising effort would have to involve many others besides the OSC.

Outstanding questions include the proposed parcel’s amount of road frontage. Barlow will contact Richards to notify her that the OSC has discussed the project, and to ask for permission to conduct a site walk.

**Motion** by Feist that the OSC initiate the process to determine whether it supports of protection of approximately 20 acres of land with frontage on Christian Hill Road, owned by the 1989 Hepatica Hill Trust, and that the OSC support the Monadnock Conservancy’s efforts to explore protection of additional Hepatica Trust lands along the Ashuelot River. Second by DiLuzio. All in favor.

---

Owens updated OSC members on Senate Bill 381. The bill allows towns to spend Conservation Fund money on easement transaction costs without requiring towns to hold an executory interest in the real estate. The bill requires towns to vote positively on a one-time warrant article to authorize the expenditure of Conservation Fund money in this way; many towns likely will include the warrant article in 2009 voting.

Carbonneau reminded Committee members that the bill pertains only to a town’s Conservation Fund. The bill does not pertain to bonding amounts and or expenditures from Swanzey’s Open Space Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund.

#### **Status of current land protection projects (project manager)**

Johnson easement (Thieme)

Not discussed at this meeting.

Pullen (DiLuzio)

At a future date (to be recommended by MC project manager P. Throop), the OSC hopes to schedule a Committee site walk and project assessment.

#### **Potential projects**

Tax Parcel Map 32 Lot 4, Carlton Road.

The Board of Selectmen has received and is considering the OSC’s request regarding possible acquisition of this land. As an initial reaction, Board members questioned the value of protecting a parcel that likely has little potential for development – the land’s location in the flood plain serves to protect it naturally. Board members will walk the Carlton Road border of the parcel.

Carbonneau agreed that the parcel's wetlands and its location in the Comprehensive Shorelands Protection District restrict development possibilities. However, the parcel is important for its recreation potential, its proximity to the culturally and historically significant Carlton Covered Bridge, and as part of an extended greenway along the South Branch, an area of town with some of the highest wildlife values in the State.

#### Canyon Springs Estates

Crowder stated that, by virtue of taking the parcel through the development review process and granting permits for development, the Town's investment of Town resources has contributed to increasing the land's value. The time to purchase the land for conservation, or to work with the landowner towards permanent protection of more of the parcel, was back before the development process began.

At that time, the OSC was unprepared to take action. However, the permitted subdivision does permanently protect the greater percentage of the parcel, as well as those portions of the parcel with highest conservation values. The lot has only enough road frontage to create two lots; therefore, road construction is required to create multiple lots.

In casual conversation, Crowder offered to get a sense of the property owner's general feelings about conservation, and to express the OSC's on-going willingness to discuss conservation options.

DiLuzio stated that the conservation benefits of protecting this parcel are unmatched in central Swanzy. Even the relatively small impact of the proposed clustered housing would diminish the parcel's contribution to protecting the large, contiguous block of wildlife habitat that also includes Mt. Caesar.

OSC members acknowledged the core challenge underscored by the discussion: How does the Committee get involved at "the front end" of proposals, before major investments of Town and developer resources, when easements are more likely to be attractive options, and to be successful?

#### Troy Hill holdings on Hale Hill Road, Old Richmond Road

Thieme led a discussion of the roughly 1,100 Swanzy acres of upland, in multiple parcels (about 300 additional acres are in Troy), that recently went on the market. A large tract abuts the Johnson Farm. Development for residential purposes would be expensive and challenging, because the land is mostly steep and its limited Class V road frontage would require building of roads. The land contains historic and cultural resources: cellar holes, cemeteries, old homestead sites, and the old coach road.

Thieme will contact Dick Fraser, from the real estate development company that is marketing the parcels, to determine whether the owners would consider the sale of pieces of the whole, and to ascertain whether conservation of some portion might be an option.

#### **Liaison reports**

SM - report deferred until next meeting

PB - report deferred until next meeting

Conservation Commission (SCC) - report deferred until next meeting

CIP - report deferred until next meeting

OS Advisory - report deferred until next meeting

#### **Status of assignments + projects**

Web page -

Project management worksheet, communications log - no activity.

Protection of 3 town-owned parcels - no activity

Town land purchase/easement management - The subdivision update workgroup continues to meet and make rapid progress.

Buck and Ike -

The team will move to the Potash Bowl on July 13 to begin training and rehearsals for the three performances of *The Old Homestead* on July 18-20. Barlow, Crowder, and Thieme will staff the team during their performances; Thieme will drive the team in the play.

Buck and Ike will be available to visit with guests on Old Home Day and, driven by Tiger Batchelder, will pull the hay cart in the Old Home Day parade. Star and Bright, Buck and Ike's 9-month-old understudies, also will be on hand during Old Home Day, and will follow Buck and Ike in the parade. OSC members are needed to staff the Old Home Day OSC information booth. Filmed interviews for "Swanzy Rural Character - The Movie" will be underway throughout the day.

Buck and Ike will represent the Town's open space protection efforts at the Cheshire Fair on Thursday, July 31. Crowder and Barlow will manage the team, and aim to deliver them by 8:00 a.m. The team likely will go home around 6:00.

DiLuzio will staff the OSC table at the ox barn (adjacent to the Arena) from noon until around 4:00. Krisch is available to help all day, and will be most needed from 9:00 until 1:00. Feist is available after 4:00. Filmed interviews for "Swanzy Rural Character - The Movie" will be underway throughout the day.

The oxen show begins at 10:30 a.m.; Buck and Ike's class (team weight of 3,501 pounds and over) is the 6th event. Buck and Ike may also participate in the 8th event, "best trained yoke, driver over 18."

Star and Bright also will attend the Fair. Their event - team weight of 701 to 1,400 pounds - is the second of the morning. They may also participate in the 8th event, "best trained yoke, driver over 18," or the 9th event, "best trained yoke, driver under 18."

Wildlife Action Plan maps (Zeh)

Frank Mitchell and Amanda Stone (UNH-CE) will meet with OSC members on Wednesday, July 16 at 3:15 to discuss next steps in the project.

Resource Directory - no activity.

**Swanzy Rural Character: The Movie**

Producer B. Barlow and director/editor E. Barlow are looking for Swanzy residents who are willing to be interviewed. They also are soliciting recommendations for people with great stories.

Interviews to date include Stanley Earle, Eileen Longe, Michael Thomas, Barry Dwyer, Paul Thomas, Earnest Perry, Molly Thieme, Melissa McCutcheon, Evan McCutcheon, Lee Dunham, Linda Lamothe, Grace Lilly, Craig Lougee, Jeanne Thieme, Autumn Prunier, Sarah Mucci, Adam Mucci, Arden Goodwin, Taylor Goodwin, McKenna Hill, Mitchell Hill, Mason Hill, Lily McCutcheon, Hannah Dettelback, Hanna Stanley, and Olivia Stanley.

Scheduled are Police Chief Busick, Bob DeJong, Scott Self, Beth Fox, Sara Carbonneau, Nancy Carlson, Bruce Tatro, Keith Thibault, Katherine Feist, Dave Krisch

Intended are Jean Blood, Deb Crowder (second take), Theresa DiLuzio, Dan Zeh, Lewis Kibler, Walt Calkin, Mike Thieme, Cynthia Brown Richards, Greg Johnson's father, Mike Johnson, Carroll Tolman, Karen Zitta, Jim Kahn and his sister Kathy, Emily Kerylow, Brian Pickering, Garth McGrath, Liz Colby, Ken Colby, Maxine Houle, Jerry Babonis, Mike Morrison, Jerry Bell, Deb

Davis, Dave Mason, Bill Hutwelker, Fire Chief Symonds, Bill Fenton, Suzie Johnson, Roger Conroy, Louise Hill, Mary Stone. Mike Johnson telling ghost stories to a group of young children.

E. Barlow collected extra footage at the Center Congregational Church during its vacation bible school class call to Buck; he also is photographing locations throughout town. These images also will be incorporated into a Powerpoint presentation.

### **Budget report**

To date, the balance in the Open Space Acquisition Capital Reserve Account is \$92,464.14  
[\$40,877.26 (balance from 2005) + \$50,000 (balance from 2006) + \$2,137.68 interest  
less expenses \$4,925 (paid out in 2006) = \$88,089.14 + \$50,000 (allocated for 2007) less  
\$33,625 allocation for purchase of Johnson easement and \$12,000 for Perry Farm transaction  
costs. Projected pending expenses: Johnson transaction costs like will be on the order of  
\$15,000 ~ \$20,000.

\$2,356.54 (35.8%) remains in the "office account." Major expenses are as follows:  
\$535 printing 3,500 copies of the Perry Farm postcard  
\$441.11 bulk-mailing the postcard  
\$285 printing 1,000 copies of the new Buck and Ike brochure  
\$530 printing 1,000 note cards (which have served as easement celebration invitations)  
\$590 printing Buck and Ike's appearances postcard  
\$785.22 easement celebration party: postage, invitations, facility rental, gift baskets, paper  
goods, catering, flowers  
\$200 trucking Buck and Ike to the Walk for Animals; to the Potash Bowl

Upcoming expenses, to be paid out from the office account:  
\$380 (approx.) 1,000 Swanzey Rural Character buttons  
\$250 to reimburse the hay fund for Buck and Ike's birthday gift plush oxen  
\$300 trucking Buck and Ike to the Potash Bowl, to the Cheshire Fair  
\$150 trucking Buck and Ike to Chesterfield for the Monadnock Conservancy's annual  
meeting  
\$1,080 total known upcoming expenses; remaining balance approximately \$1,276

*(NB: Please distinguish the Open Space Acquisition Capital Reserve Account – managed by the  
Selectmen - from the Conservation Fund. The Conservation Fund, which is managed by the  
Conservation Commission, includes income from the Current Use change tax.)*

### **New business**

Heart and Soul application not funded A July 7 letter from the Orton Family Foundation states:  
"While your application was compelling, we ultimately selected two communities that we  
determined to have the most complete fit with the Foundation's program goals and expectations,  
demonstrated the greatest potential for a replicable model in our two to three year timeframe, and  
demonstrated a clear sense of urgency in facing the pressures of growth."

Orton visit On July 16, three members of the Orton Family Foundation staff will visit to learn  
more about Swanzey's approach to celebrating and protecting the town's rural character. Town  
participants will include Selectman Carlson, Town Administrator Fox, Town Planner Carbonneau,  
Police Chief Busick, Planning Board member Self, Open Space Committee chair Barlow, as well as  
Cheshire YMCA CEO DeJong.

Chapter 482-A:28 Fill and Dredge in Wetlands; Aquatic Resource Compensatory Mitigation

To help the OSC and SCC better understand the law's application for open space protection, Carbonneau has arranged for State-sponsored training. The workshop will be held on Tuesday, July 22, at 6:00 to 8:00 in the Trustees Room at the Keene Public Library.

"Swanzey Rural Character" buttons

Barlow is arranging production of a second run of 1,000 buttons, to feature Crowder's new portrait of Buck and Ike.

Other business as may be required

Carbonneau recommended providing guest books at the OSC's booths at The Old Homestead, at Old Home Day, and at the Cheshire Fair. These collections of signatures help the OSC quantify participation.

**Minutes of 6/10/08 meeting**

MOTION to approve by Crowder, second by Zeh. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.      Next meeting: August 12

Respectfully submitted,  
Victoria Barlow