

Swanzy Open Space Committee

5/13/08 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.

Status of current land protection projects (project manager)

Johnson easement (Thieme)

Ryan Owens (MC) has scheduled a farm visit for May 16, to discuss the MC's policies regarding best management practices for pastures containing streams. Water resources are one of the top reasons the Johnson Farm merits protection, and the MC's easement deeds urge (but do not obligate) compliance with best management practices. Those practices clearly state that livestock should be kept out of water. The MC would not choose to force the issue unless conservation values are clearly threatened. Owens is eager to work with Johnson to find ways to fence the stream, including looking for grants on his behalf, but doesn't think the issue alone should make or break the project.

On the Johnson's side, progress on the easement has stagnated, due in part to Suzie Johnson's poor health. The Johnsons still have to finalize some estate planning questions, and Owens is reluctant to invest a lot more into the project until he has a sense that these other matters can be resolved. Johnson remains strongly committed to conserving the farm.

DiLuzio suggested making use of the farm programs of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (part of USDA, out of Walpole), to help address the best management practices.

Pullen (DiLuzio)

Ryan Owens has been in touch with the Pullens; the Pullens met Peter Throop (MC) at the easement celebration party, and the MC site walk has taken place. At the June Board meeting, the MC will vote on whether to proceed with the project.

At its June meeting, the OSC will schedule a Committee site walk and project assessment.

Dunn (DiLuzio)

On April 10 Dee Robbins (MC) learned from Irma Dunn that her son is not in favor of proceeding with a conservation easement on Mrs. Dunn's Taylor Hill property. Robbins told Mrs. Dunn that the MC would be glad to help her family with any further questions if and when her son may be open to further conversation. Dr. Kibler has expressed interest in sharing information with the family.

Potential projects

In late April Greg Curry (Curry Real Estate) contacted Carbonneau to let her know that the owners of Tax Parcel Map 33 Lot 4 are interested in selling their 18-20 acre wetland on Carlton Road, just east of the covered bridge. By Curry's estimation, the Bakaj estate land is not buildable; perhaps its only value might be as off-site floodwater mitigation. Harriett Robinson owns the 27.5 acres on the northwesterly corner of the Bridge. The parcel connects with 41 acres of Town-owned land (Map 33, Lot 2-3) for a contiguous wildlife corridor. John A. Bakaj inherited the land, and lives in West Virginia.

The parcel's assessed value is \$61,100, and it is not in Current Use. If the Town is interested in purchase, Curry advises the Town to make an offer.

Barlow and Curry walked the Carlton Road frontage on May 6, and explored a short distance along the South Branch. For easier walking, Curry recommends OSC members view the South Branch boundary from the west shore of the river.

Options include Town purchase, with the possibility of a future picnic and canoe-launch area. As wildlife habitat, the parcel is rich with a variety of bird, plant, and amphibian species.

Before the June meeting, Committee members will visit the land to make their individual assessments.

Crowder felt that a potential Town purchase might represent a shift in OSC policy.

Liaison reports

SM - The Selectmen have authorized the Nature Conservancy to make use of the Muster Field, Florence Belding parcel, and the Sawmill parcel to conduct research on the types of plants that can grow in a floodplain forest. The purpose of the study is to guide water level management practices, as well as to measure long-term ecological change on floodplains in the Connecticut River basin. The study will include tagging trees.

PB - At the April 17 public hearing, the Planning Board voted to adopt the Conservation Residential Subdivision regulations as an amendment to the subdivision regulations. The working group now is revising the balance of the subdivision regulations, working from a model prepared by Southwest Region Planning Commission.

Conservation Commission (SCC) - The SCC held its roadside cleanup day on April 19.

CIP - The Committee is back in session, refining its focus. Expanded facilities - Town Hall, Center Swanzey Fire Station, and the police station - rise to the top of a long list of needed Town improvements. The group has asked Town Administrator Fox to prepare a RFP for a consultant to help the Town clearly define its space needs, and build consensus for creating new space.

OS Advisory - Thieme has prepared and distributed the next quarterly report.

Status of assignments + projects

Web page - After seeing the Kibler's gift basket, a friend of the Kiblers called to see whether she could purchase a basket. Committee members discussed including links on the OSC web site to the web sites of the artists who created the contents of the baskets.

Project management worksheet, communications log - no activity.

Protection of 3 town-owned parcels - no activity.

Town land purchase/easement management - Crowder and Barlow
See **Liaison Reports** - Planning Board)

Buck and Ike - Barlow and Thieme

Committee members thanked Thieme for establishing a separate Old Homestead Association credit union account for donations to "bale out" Buck and Ike.

Bruce Barlow has completed "The Ballad of Buck and Ike." Committee members heard a recording of its debut performance.

Weather permitting, the team has been in the yoke for training on Monday and Friday afternoons. Thieme is preparing to drive during the Monadnock Humane Society's Walk for Animals.

Diane Mattson (Mill House Florist) has offered to stock plush oxen for sale. Barlow delivered 12 on May 6, along with 50 postcards and 50 brochures.

Annette Studebaker and Mark Manougian, owners of Ashuelot River Campground, also requested literature for their guests. They now have 50 postcards and 50 brochures, and are interested in hosting Buck and Ike for an event. They will think about fun ideas.

Barlow bulk-mailed the Buck and Ike event postcard on April 21.

Wildlife Action Plan maps

Along with Keene, Alstead, and Gilsum, Swanzey has been selected to participate in UNH Cooperative Extension's Wildlife Action Plan Assistance Program. Swanzey and Keene will be partners, as will Alstead and Gilsum. The program calls for meetings in June, July, September, and October, with a joint meeting of all four towns in November.

Zeh will take the lead for OSC participation; DiLuzio also has expressed interest. In confirming our interest, we suggested June 3, 17, or 24, from 5:00 to 6:00, as a potential first meeting.

Resource Directory - no activity.

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.

\$2,565.09 (39%) 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

(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

Review of easement celebration party

Carbonneau prepared a list of names and addresses of the approximately 65 guests attended.

Feist publicized the event's success in a letter to the *Keene Sentinel*, printed on 4/30/08.

The Committee received appreciative thank-you notes from Mary Jane Gill, the Kiblers, and Jean Blood, as well as Mike and Grace Lilly.

Recommendations for next year, suggested by Carbonneau:

- A guest registry
 - Flowers or balloons near the entrance, to add a festive touch
 - Name tags for guests (OSC members to prepare, at the event)
 - Designate a photographer (Thanks go to Zeh, for thinking of it this year.)
- Book the KSC Camp for next year. Perfect location; adequate parking, great space.
 - Plan to again honor special guests with corsages or boutonnieres.

Planning for the Walk for Animals Sunday, May 18, 10:00 – 2:00

The oxen will arrive between 8:00 and 8:30, and Thieme is the day's teamster. Other Committee members will help the public interact with the team, and Carbonneau will staff the information table.

Buck and Ike's birthday party Saturday, May 31, 1:00 – 3:00

Members observed that this year's event will be easier, because OSC members won't have to first build a paddock, or walk the team to and from the Potash Bowl.

Carbonneau will arrange for K. Ainsworth to create the birthday cake.

Crowder will bring her tent for a covered seating area for older guests. Thieme will contact these special guests to issue them a personal invitation.

Paper supplies are left over from the easement celebration party.

Barlow will bring lemonade and the team's cabbage "cakes," and contact Paul Thomas (Twinkletown) to see whether he would again like to donate ice cream cone coupons.

Buck and Ike will have plush oxen as gifts for the first 50 guests who are 10 years old or younger. Barlow will publicize the party to young children at Mt. Caesar Elementary.

Other business as may be required

DiLuzio raised the idea of Town purchase of the central Swanzey parcel now permitted as a cluster housing development called Canyon Springs Estates. DiLuzio presented an overview of information gathered by Grace Lilly to document the conservation values of the property.

Berkshire Construction Company, LLC has purchased the property, with approvals for development in place, for \$450,000. Acknowledging that this figure is well beyond the Town's means, DiLuzio suggested creative financing alternatives, such as the sale of a few house lots and conservation of the remaining land, perhaps with a bargain easement purchase. Her largest concern with the proposed development is fragmentation of natural communities. She envisions that purchase of the land would require a cross-Committee, town-wide effort that reasonably would take years to accomplish.

Committee members raised concerns:

- The parcel is not on the market, nor has the owner approached the Committee to discuss Town purchase. The entire concept may be moot if Berkshire Construction Company has no interest in selling the land.
- The parcel has a high value for development, and so would be expensive.
- As developed, the parcel has the potential to generate tax revenue for the Town.
- As a cluster subdivision, the approved development is designed to preserve the parcel's most significant wildlife habitat as large blocks of land. The development calls for improving an historic woods road, with minimal disturbance of habitat, rather than creating a new road. A conventional subdivision could have a much greater impact.
- The OSC's current priority is protecting the Martin Brook watershed, and several projects in the watershed are now in the works.

- OSC resources – human and financial – are limited; taking on a project of this scope could spread the Committee too thin.

Feist identified a core question: How can the OSC prepare to protect the places Swanzeys treasures *before* they go up for sale? Once certain parcels go on the market, we're out of the running.

Committee members agreed to take no immediate action, and instead consider the idea until the June meeting.

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- The 13-acre Lovering parcel on the west side of Honey Hill is for sale.
 - DiLuzio attended a MC-sponsored workshop at the Perry Farm. She received copies of a 1892 map of Swanzeys, and census data on the inhabitants of the Perry Farm (1910 - 1810) and agricultural census information (1850 - 1870) to add to the project file.
 - Carbonneau distributed an article from *NH Town and City* (May) on statewide Town Meeting appropriations for open space protection.
 - Barlow responded to a *Keene Sentinel* article about the Community Conservation Partnership with a letter to the editor printed on 4/28/08.

New assignments

Visit the Carlton Road parcel.

Consider DiLuzio's proposal regarding Canyon Springs Estates.

Staff the Walk for Animals, and Buck and Ikes birthday party.

Minutes of 4/8/08 meeting

MOTION to approve by Feist, second by Thieme. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m. Next meeting: June 10

Respectfully submitted,
Victoria Barlow

May 13, 2008 Joint Meeting:
Swanzy Open Space Committee and Swanzy Conservation Commission

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

Paul Daniello, Michael Day, Steve Stepenuck, Gerry Babonis (arrived at 6:50)

The two groups met from 6:30 to 7:00, to discuss ways to enhance communication and cooperation. The meeting began with introductions.

In early April, in preparation for the joint meeting, Barlow e-mailed to the SCC the OSC's report of mission, approach, and annual goals.

From a 5/9/08 e-mail message to Barlow from SCC Chair Stepenuck:

At this time the CC does not have a formal mission and goals statement.

My perception of our goals for this year: With housing starts down this year, there are fewer wetlands permit applications and alleged violations, so the time is right for us to move from the negative, and get to some of the more positive aspects of our job, like managing those properties for which we are responsible. Thus, for at least a year, we have been working on

- getting better signage for conservation lands in town,
- signs designating the "protected" status of the Ashuelot River in town,
- removal of invasive plants on town-owned lands,
- better management of the scrub-shrub wetland that is the Muster Property,
- safer access to/from the Mount Cresson Conservation area, and possibly a loop trail there.

SCC members presented their additions to Stepenuck's list of priority activities.

- conduct annual roadside cleanup
- sponsor a canoe trip
- monitor town parcels for OEP
- sponsor two campers at Berry Conservation Camp in Berlin
- increase public awareness of Town-owned land
- improve the public perception of the SCC

Regarding improved communication and coordination, Carbonneau encouraged both groups to make use of the town website. She solicited photographs and text contributions for "What Makes Swanzy Special," suggesting this as an ideal way to increase public awareness of Town-owned land. Minutes, agendas, and public notices all are available at the site. To ensure timely postings, she asked for at least a month lead-time before a scheduled event.

Stepenuck suggested the SCC and OSC co-sponsor hikes on Town-owned land, as well as a joint project of developing a pamphlet to list and describe the properties. Daniello suggested that the SCC share information regarding SCC scheduled workshops, so that the OSC could help and participate.

Respectfully submitted,
Victoria Barlow