

Swanzy Open Space Committee  
5/8/07 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 5:05 p.m.

**Attendance:** Victoria Barlow, Nancy Carlson, Deb Crowder, Theresa Diluzio, Jeanne Thieme, Bud Winsor. Town Planner Carbonneau.

NOTE: Please update your OS e-mail distribution list, if any of these names are missing.

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**Special guest**

John Newcombe from Monadnock Appraisal Company described the process he uses to appraise conservation land. He also discussed the following:

- a. We have a limited window of opportunity – perhaps 10 years at most – before land values in our region achieve the same prohibitively high levels as eastern NH. Land values in Cheshire County are fairly reasonable compared to other parts of the State. At this point, most easements in the region are donated rather than sold to conservation organizations.
- b. Although restrictions on use of conserved land can reduce its value, the reserved portion of the parcel can increase significantly because of its proximity to the protected portion.
- c. Landowners often overestimate the development potential – and thus the value – of their property. With road construction costs running about \$200/foot, the expense of building infrastructure to serve a subdivision can approach the selling price of the lots.
- d. Limited subdivisions of very large lots (for example, a 200-acre parcel subdivided into two 100-acre lots) may help to conserve land when the parcel owner is unwilling to use a conservation easement.
- e. Every appraisal is unique, and not all parts of a conserved parcel need be protected by the same restrictions.
- f. Area resources for creative easement design include Meade Cadot (Harris Center) and Dick Ober (Monadnock Conservancy). Newcombe made a standing offer to speak with Swanzy landowners who might consider protecting their land if they could be reassured about the effect of an easement on the value of their land.

**Status of current land protection projects**

Pendleton easement

No news – Attorney Caffrey is still trying to get the Texas lender to correct Lily's reverse mortgage.

Johnson easement

The Monadnock Conservancy's Board voted on April 13 to proceed with the project. The MC will meet with Johnson on May 14 to review next steps. We have written to ask the Board of Selectmen to schedule the public hearings required to release funds from the Conservation Land Acquisition capital reserve fund to make the donation to the MC for their purchase of the Johnson easement, and to pay for transaction costs. OS members received a copy of the letter.

Thieme reported that the Cheshire Fair Association has decided to discontinue the Little Red Barn, the farm animal petting barn for children that Johnson has stocked and managed for 39 years, to instead use the building for merchandise sales. Thieme shared a letter she has written to the Association to oppose this decision, which appears to be in violation of the agreement under which the Barn was donated to the Association.

#### Martin Brook/Perry Brook watershed

The Conservancy recently toured the Kibler parcel. That project is proceeding.

#### **Liaison reports**

Planning Board: The May 3 PB discussion of needed zoning changes culminated in the creation of a working group to explore, among other things, revising zoning districts to support protection of the Open Space Plan's priority conservation land.

Conservation Commission: Committee members received via e-mail (sent April 11) notes of the Conservation Commission's description of their mission and scope, resulting from OS attendance at the April ConCom meeting.

CIP Committee: On April 16, Barlow presented the CIP Committee with a modified version of the report used at the Conservation Commission meeting on April 10. OS members received a copy of the report.

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

Web page - We need to write the text for the page - perhaps based on the OS brochure?

Project management worksheet, communications log - Feist has rescheduled to the June meeting the discussion of her work.

#### Protection of 3 town-owned lands - Carlson and Winsor

After extensive review of tax parcel maps, the next step is walking the land under consideration.

Top priorities for conservation easements include Mt. Caesar and the "Mill K"/Riley property.

Permanent protection of Mt. Caesar may be impossible because of the donor family's remainder interest, which would go into effect if the town abdicated on operating the Carpenter Home. We may need a legal opinion.

The Tracey property on Causeway Road has deed restrictions, but protection could possibly be strengthened with a conservation easement.

Because of flooding, the Mary Penny parcel (across from Rymes on Sawyers Crossing Road) is not in danger of development.

The town-owned Fraser property at Matthews Road and Sawyers Crossing is not a high priority for easement protection.

A Westport parcel may be worthy of town ownership and protection.

Town land purchase/easement management – This effort now focuses on the currently most likely scenario in which the Town might be asked to own or manage conservation land – when such land is part of a conservation subdivision. A working group consisting of Crowder and Barlow (representing Open Space), Scott Self (representing the Planning Board), and two to-be-determined members of ConCom will research and prepare recommended changes to transform Swanzey’s existing cluster subdivision regulations into proposed conservation subdivision regulations. The group will hold its first meeting in May. Interested OC members may wish to attend a lecture/workshop on conservation subdivisions sponsored by the Jaffrey ConCom at 7:00 p.m. on May 24 at the Jaffrey Meetinghouse.

March postcard – on hold.

Oxen initiative –

Thanks to 17 hard-working volunteers and nearly \$1,000 in donated materials from The Cheshire Horse, Hamshaw Lumber, and Mike Johnson, the new corral has been built.

The 4’ x 6’ sign commissioned by Katherine Feist and Dave Krisch was designed by Deb Crowder, translated into Photoshop by Evan Barlow, and executed in vinyl on plastic by Ralph Randolph. Dave Krisch has the completed sign, and will install it shortly before the birthday party.

We have postcard invitations and posters announcing the birthday party on May 20. Douglas Cuddlettoys has offered between 100 and 200 little plush oxen, wearing red kerchiefs that say “Buck and Ike,” for the oxen to give to party guests who are 9 years old and younger.

Twinkletown has offered the guys tickets for junior-sized ice cream cones to give to their young guests.

Ruth Snyder’s daughter will supply a sheet cake decorated with Buck and Ike’s portrait.

**We need volunteers to bake cupcakes for the two-leggers.** Turn-out may be high.

Wildlife Action Plan maps – We await a response from the Town’s tax map provider. This company has been asked to transform tax parcel data to GIS format.

### **Budget report**

To date, the balance in the Open Space Acquisition Fund is \$138,089.14

[\$40,877.26 (balance from 2005) + \$50,000 (balance from 2006) + \$,2137.68 interest less expenses \$4,925 (paid out in 2006) = \$88,089.14 + \$50,000 (allocated for 2007)]

### **New business**

1. Thieme led a discussion on responding to interested citizens’ offers of help with Open Space Committee work. The Open Space Committee continues to receive offers of help from Swanzey citizens. Randy Martin (Keene Motorsports) and Jerry Bussiere both have expressed interest in helping the Committee. How to put this interest to the Town’s best advantage?

When people offer their help, we will add their names to a resource directory that lists name, contact information, and area of expertise or interest (for example, geographical familiarity, legal skills, etc.). Immediate needs include help with walking town properties under consideration for protection.

2. Crowder reported on attending the spring Planning and Zoning Conference. The keynote speaker, Peter Francese (NE Economic Partnership) encouraged cluster development as a way to create diversity in housing types, thereby protecting economic diversity in communities.

**New assignments**

Committee members took posters advertising the oxen birthday party to install in designated locations.

**Minutes of 4/10 meeting**

Vote by Carlson to approve the minutes. Second by Winsor. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Victoria Barlow