

Open Space Committee

June 9, 2009 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 also was present.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Proposed correction, page 1, Friends of Mt. Caesar Advisory Committee: DiLuzio said that an ATV club is forming, and will encourage responsible use of ATVs. ~~Members of the new group may be interested in playing a role in organizing use of Mt. Caesar trails.~~

Motion by Zeh to approve, as corrected, the minutes of the May 12, 2009 meeting. Second by Feist. All in favor.

SPECIAL GUEST: Evan Barlow ~ Official hand-off of the *Swanzey Rural Character* film (5:00 – 5:30)
OSC members presented Evan Barlow with a letter of appreciation for his contribution to the town, and formally received the completed film. Feist contributed a luscious cake to the celebration.

BUSINESS 5:30 – 6:30

Committee members discussed possible future possible uses of the film, whether to expand the Swanzey Rural Character project and, if so, what for that expansion might take.

Swanzey Rural Character project financial status Barlow reported that the “Swanzey Rural Character” domain name has been registered, and said she would be willing to establish a web site and apply for non-profit status as a 501(c)3 to create a financing umbrella for future work. She suggested relieving the Old Homestead Association of responsibility of being the fiscal agent for the hay fund ~ Thieme, who manages the fund, concurred ~ and said that the proposed non-profit would be eligible to receive grants from funding agencies that do not fund municipalities. Barlow said that OSC members might be board members. The group questioned the mission of such an organization, and how it might operate and be administered. Crowder recommended that the OSC stay within its original purpose, perhaps setting up a fund for land conservation, and said that she didn’t want the group to be perceived as spinning off into “cheerleading” status.

Carbonneau said that a Swanzey Rural Character project might provide opportunities outside of the OSC’s focus. If it was formed, she suggested that an OSC member might be a representative in the organization. Rather than establishing a non-profit, Tatro suggested that the Fire Department’s fund for receiving charitable contributions might serve as a model.

Proposed workshop to expose additional audiences to the film: Barlow presented an outline of a proposed half-day session, possibly to be presented in collaboration with the Monadnock Conservancy, that would include a screening of *Swanzey Rural Character*, a demonstration of filming an interview (taking advantage of an offer from the Orton Family Foundation to provide a compelling speaker), and an overview of simple ways to conduct oral histories. As proposed, the audience would be citizens from Swanzey and from towns participating in the Monadnock Conservancy’s Community Conservation Partnership.

Carbonneau said that such an event would underscore the idea that 75-80% of inspiring a conservation easement is encouraging a positive feeling about the community. She said that the workshop could help the OSC share expertise with other towns, and encourage connections among citizens. Carbonneau encouraged taking advantage of the Orton Foundation's offer of a speaker, and said all would benefit from the address. She recommended structuring the session to have opportunities for those who are less interested in technical approaches.

DiLuzio said that she felt the OSC should complete a sequel to *Swanzy Rural Character* prior to claiming expertise; a sequel would give the OSC more to talk about. DiLuzio questioned the legitimacy of an OSC workshop on land conservation, given the low percentage of conserved land in Swanzy. She recommended inviting speakers from area towns to participate by presenting their ideas related to land conservation, and said that she would like to see Swanzy citizens involved in any workshop. DiLuzio said that the OSC has to conserve more land.

Crowder recommended focusing on promoting rural character as the way to preserve land, rather than promoting Swanzy itself. She recommended inviting Ryan Owens to be present to answer questions related to conservation easements.

Feist said that the OSC has talked about hosting an event related to open space protection as a way to get towns together, and said that there are a multitude of ways to preserve rural character.

Involving Southwest Region Planning Commission was suggested.

Those present agreed that consensus had not been reached, and agreed to give the idea more thought.

Sequel film project Regarding her recommendation to create a sequel to *Swanzy Rural Character*, DiLuzio advocated creating a film specifically about the process of a conservation easement, including interviews with easement holders who describe the stories of their easements: why they chose to protect their land, the steps of the process, footage of the land, possibly interviews with people interested in protecting their land, etc. Crowder agreed that future projects should focus on conservation; in her opinion, conservation is not a message of the *Swanzy Rural Character* film. Those present discussed who might create such a video – possibly high school students; possibly younger students each supplied with a video camera for a week; possibly a high school student editing footage collected from interviews by Bruce Barlow or another adult.

Feist said that conducting interviews may be more responsibility than young people can successfully handle. She also noted that, at least for the foreseeable future, Evan Barlow is finished with editing films for the Town. Thieme said that *Swanzy Rural Character* sets a high bar.

Zeh asked how the OSC might transform the excitement generated by *Swanzy Rural Character* interviews into eagerness to conserve land in Swanzy. He said that the film project has not altered the pace of land conservation, and asked how it might be possible to boost the process somehow. Carbonneau reminded the group that, while many projects exist in Swanzy in various stages of development, there is no instant gratification in land conservation. She encouraged those present to expect projects to take three to five years for completion, and discouraged a “hard sell” approach.

Increasing availability of interview archives The group discussed preparing sets of the 20+ interview archive DVDs for the Mt. Caesar Library, Stratton Free Library, and MRHS library. Barlow said that she has been told that preparing disks on her family's reproduction system takes approximately 45 minutes per interview, start to finish, and said that she will have to learn how to duplicate the disks.

Calendar Zeh suggested creating a Swanzy Rural Character calendar as a fundraiser.

Promotion of The Old Homestead Tatro recommended building on *The Old Homestead* section of *Swanzy Rural Character* with additional interviews, history and stories to promote the annual production of the play.

As a statement about the identity of Swanzy as a community, Feist said that *Swanzy Rural Character* offers a step up into the bigger picture of town planning. She encouraged the group to consider how that picture can inform the town in conserving land. Thieme said that the film reaches across a broad age group. Crowder said that the film brought many people together, and said that it would be wonderful to generate a similar level of excitement every couple of years.

Swanzy Rural Character release days staffing (3:00 - 5:00, June 26; 9:00 - noon, June 27)
Group members briefly discussed staffing needs. Set-up will begin at 2:00 on Friday, and 11:00 on Saturday. Barlow will bring lemonade, and OSC members were encouraged to bring cookies or brownies.

Buck and Ike

Barlow reported that Buck and Ike have been invited to Swanzy Lake Campground on July 4 and to Oak Park in Greenfield, NH (date TBD). The hosts will cover the cost of trucking, and will make a contribution to the hay fund.

Other business as may be required

Balloons DiLuzio said that she opposes OSC use of balloons, which are not readily biodegradable or reusable, to draw attention to events like Buck and Ike's birthday party or the release of *Swanzy Rural Character*. DiLuzio recommended re-usable flags, and group members discussed possible designs.

6:30 - 6:50 Reports and requests for future agenda items

Conservation projects DiLuzio reported that representatives of the Nature Conservancy have visited land in West Swanzy with frontage on the Ashuelot River, and will re-visit the area by canoe. The interest is in conjunction with Connecticut River restoration.

Wish list map OSC members agreed that the next meeting should be devoted to analyzing potential projects, to help direct activities towards specific future conservation efforts. Zeh will prepare the map for the July meeting.

Carbonneau said that activities and mailings are useful because they help make conservation easements part of the community's lexicon, but personal contact ultimately is the most effective tool in conserving land.

Feist asked the group to envision all the land that will be conserved in the next ten years, with sure knowledge of success.

IMPORTANT DATES

June 26 & June 27: Special release days - *Swanzy Rural Character*

July 4 Buck and Ike to the Swanzy Lake Campground

July 17, 18, 19 *The Old Homestead*

July 19 **Old Home Day**

September 12 **Humane Society Walk for Animals**

October 3 **MRHS homecoming**

BUDGET REPORT

Approximately \$3,000 remains in the year's budget. Major expenses to date are as follows:

\$150 Keene State College camp rental, easement celebration party

\$485 Brochures/DVD inserts – Buck and Ike

\$450 Pullen postcard bulk mailing

\$605 Pullen postcard printing

\$459 Buck and Ike postcard printing

\$697 Buck and Ike events postcard bulk mailing

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Tatro; second by Feist. The meeting adjourned at 6:50.

NEXT MEETING

Next regular meeting: July 14, 2009, 5:00 p.m., Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Reck Barlow, Chair