

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Open Space Committee
Meeting Minutes – December 12, 2012

Note: Minutes are not final until reviewed and approved by the Committee. Review and approval of minutes generally takes place on the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee.

Present at Meeting: Chair Jeanne Thieme called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Present were Kenneth Colby, Jr., Selectmen's representative, Jeanne Thieme, Chairman, Paula Shank, Bob McKelvey, Judy Hildebrandt, Beverly Bernard, Sharon Greatbatch, and Theresa DiLuzio.

Absent: Deb Crowder

Others Present:

NEW BUSINESS

- **Possible Acquisition of Property by the Town** - Colby introduced the idea of the possibility of purchasing a piece of property by the river in West Swanzey. As a result of the Plan NH Charrette which proposed Town owned open space on the river, it has come to the forefront of attention of the Selectmen. The property up for sale on the river can be purchased by agreement of the Selectmen so long as two public hearings are held and the Selectmen have the recommendation of the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. Colby said it could be done relatively quickly. The two public hearings would have to be within 14 days of each other, and before that the input of the two committees would be required. Colby said the asking price is \$60,000 for the property. The idea is to make a park on the land, and he reported that the Selectmen were leaning toward demolition of the building. The building is old and it would take a lot of work to bring it up to code. Colby mentioned Hinsdale's park built on an old mill site and how that has enhanced Hinsdale for its citizens. Colby said that all costs would come in somewhere under \$100,000. He asked the Open Space Committee (OSC) to consider funding some of the project out of the Land Acquisition Account, since it would be for open space. DiLuzio asked if there was any room for negotiations with the current owners. Colby said that perhaps there is but the price has already come down. He also pointed out that the money would stay within the Town in the form of contributions to Town activities. Colby said he is concerned about having a hazardous material assessment and how much that would cost. The Land Acquisition Account that the Selectmen are looking at for funding the project has about \$200,000 in it and it is within the OSC's jurisdiction. It is funded by the Town every year. Colby said he was looking for a vote of confidence from the OSC. Greatbatch asked about the other side of the river that the Town owns. **Motion** by Hildebrandt for vote of confidence to support moving forward with the project with the understanding the details have yet to be worked out.

Further discussion – Greatbatch asked if the building was paying taxes and would the Town be losing that tax revenue. Colby said the property can be taxed now, but in the recent past it was not because it had non-profit usage status and it hadn't been generating a profit. Property has about 200 feet on the river. Greatbatch asked how the park would be configured. Colby responded that

the Selectmen were envisioning a walkway and benches and not a ballpark. He said that the Selectmen will have ultimate control over how the park evolves, but that the Charrette is really the guiding principle. Colby repeated that he felt the building has to go.

Motion seconded by Bernard, all in favor except Colby who abstained since he is a Selectman.
Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Deb Crowder** – the members of the committee discussed the need to continue to help the Crowder family while Deb is ill. Mrs. Blood, Crowder’s mother, is very appreciative of the daily pick-up and delivery of mail and paper to her door by the members. For the upcoming week, DiLuzio will cover Saturday and Wednesday, Thieme will take the December 20th, Bernard will do Fridays, and Hildebrandt will do Monday.

Thieme also suggested that the Town Annual Report might be dedicated to Deb Crowder since she has done much for the town over the years. DiLuzio agreed to make a list of Crowder’s accomplishments with the idea of writing a letter to the Board of Selectmen.

Thieme also raised the issue of the committee being one person short with Crowder’s absence due to illness. Thieme said Mary Farnsworth is very interested on being on the committee, and Thieme has invited her to the January meeting to meet the rest of the members. Colby said we could create an alternate. Thieme asked how that is done. Thieme will ask Town Planner, Sara Carbonneau or Town Administrator O’Keefe about how to institute an alternate or two for the committee.

- **Conservation Trail Benches** - Thieme asked about putting the plaques on the benches that have been installed on three (3) viewscapes on trails under conservation easement. Plaques for the benches providing the name of the logger who built the benches and the OSC which financed them need to be placed on the benches. DiLuzio and Bernard will take one up to Mt. Cresson. Thieme will take one to Carroll's Hill. Greatbatch will take the plaque up to Mt. Caesar. Honey Hill needs to be done. It was agreed that just the one bench on Mt. Caesar needs a bolt to anchor the seat with the foundation so it can’t be tipped. Greatbatch agreed to look into this. Thieme will talk to Victoria Barlow about placing the plaque on the Honey Hill bench. Thieme asked DiLuzio if she had an address for David Roy to send him a thank you note. DiLuzio will provide the address.

There is a fifth bench to be completed. The committee discussed some ideas for the 5th bench. It could be placed in Dickinson Forest, suggested DiLuzio. Greatbatch suggested maybe the bench could be placed somewhere on the rail trail.

- **Yale Project** - Thieme reminded the committee that two people from OSC were to meet with Steve Roberge and Ryan Owens of the Monadnock Conservancy to discuss how to approach Yale over Swanzey’s concerns about the future of Yale Forest. Crowder was supposed to be one of the two, with Thieme the second. McKelvey and DiLuzio said they thought this was still an important project. Thieme suggested that someone should volunteer to fill in for Crowder.

DiLuzio volunteered to fill in the spot. DiLuzio and Thieme will attend the meeting, no date selected as yet. Colby asked what would be accomplished by Thieme and DiLuzio meeting with Owens and Roberge. Thieme responded that the idea was to brainstorm ideas for connecting with Yale. They want to begin the process with casual contact first. Anything more is too premature.

- **Spring Dedication for Oxen** – Thieme said that after discussion with Victoria Barlow who owned the oxen the OSC would be celebrating in the spring, it was felt that with one member out ill it would be inappropriate to plan a celebration now. Therefore, the committee tabled this action.
- **OSC 2012 narrative for the Annual Report** - photos, text – The committee needs to prepare a narrative to be included in the Town of Swanzey Annual Report. Amy Bush is responsible for producing the Annual Report and she needs copy by January 1, 2013. Thieme noted that the committee produced new trailhead boxes, the video, the trail benches and other activities. Thieme will put together a narrative with the new items done in 2012 and then send it to Bernard for comments. The committee also agreed to write a letter to the Board of Selectmen suggesting the Town Annual Report be dedicated to Deb Crowder.
- **OSC brochure update** - Thieme provided the OSC brochure that has been created by Victoria Barlow and edited by DiLuzio and Thieme. She asked the committee to consider two different background colors: one in light green and one in beige. Hildebrandt said that there isn't a lot of white space which makes it a bit difficult to read. Hildebrandt also suggested the need for a revision date in a corner of the document. Thieme pointed out that by the time the brochure is finished, we can use a 2013 date. Thieme will check with Barlow to make changes or if she hasn't the time, Bernard will look at it.
- **Treasurer's Report** - Hildebrandt passed out copies of the latest treasurer's report showing \$3,039 expended between January 2012 and November 2012.
- **News from the Conservation Commission** – DiLuzio reported that Dave Roy said he could cut the trees and bushes to clear the view at the tops of hills where there are conservation easement trails. She reported that the Conservation Commission didn't vote on paying Roy, but they said they will wait until spring to consider it since the weather might change at any minute and make it impossible to do the work until spring. DiLuzio reported that the members of the Conservation Commission seemed positive about the idea. DiLuzio reminded the members that the Wilson Pond public hearing regarding a change in wetland setback requirement is coming up.

Adjournment: DiLuzio made a **motion** to adjourn, Shank seconded, all were in favor. **Motion passed.**
Adjournment at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary