

Northfield Open Space Committee

Minutes, July 15, 2014

Town Hall – Planning Board Room

Items in italics require action prior to next meeting.

Present: Mike Barry, Bob Hall, Joanne McGee, Sue Ross, Jenny Tufts, Jerry Wagener, Chair.

Absent: Julia Blyth, Kate Rossiter (LOA), Sue Handren, Joe Stacy (at Selectboard meeting about Community Park)

Guests: Lucy Livingston, Chris La Pointe (Trust for Public Land Project Manager)

The meeting opened at 7:00 p.m.

1. **Minutes:** The Committee approved the May 20, 2014, minutes (Sue/Jenny 5 – 0) and the June 17, 2014, minutes (Jenny/Bob 5 – 0).
2. **Land Stewardship subcommittee:** The committee briefly discussed the duties and responsibilities of the new Land Stewardship formed by the Conservation Committee.

7:35 p.m. Jerry leaves to brief Selectboard about Community Park Committee.

3. **Trust for Public Land report on NMH land option:**

Chris La Pointe updated the Selectboard about the report on East Northfield Water Company (ENWC) and about Department of Conservation and Recreation's interest in the forestland. The Selectboard voted to be a third party on the Landscape Partnership Grant to be submitted by Trust for Public Land by the deadline July 31st. Mount Grace is also submitting a Landscape Partnership Grant for the Quabbin to Wachusett project, but Chris doubted that there would be much competition.

The ownership decisions can wait until after the grant award. One proposed scenario is that DCR would own 1200 acres and hold the conservation restriction on the watershed land. The town would own the watershed land (about 350 acres). If Northfield Water District wants to take over the ENWC it would lease the land from the town. DCR is not comfortable with owning someone else's watershed land.

On July 16th Chris, DCR management foresters, Mike Mauri (NMH forester), and NMH representatives will visit the property. DCR will hold its land committee meeting on July 17th. *Chris will report to the OS committee the results of the July 17th meeting.* Next, DCR will meet with the Open Space Committee about forest and trail management on August 12 (proposed). Mike Barry suggested a pilot project with DCR to manage a plot, log it, and put the dollars back into the land. Sue is concerned about the recreation management of the land. Would there be public access on the watershed? Chris said other municipalities have used a variety of models. Some people consider that allowing the public on watershed lands gives towns another set of watchful eyes.

Also on July 16th Chris will meet with the Northfield Water District Commissioners and engineering firm Weston & Sampson. As he reported last month, Chris said that the ENWC is extremely well-run for a small system and has a high quality water source. The Company has kept up with state regulations and ongoing maintenance. If a filtration plant is needed, the cost would be lower than expected (about \$700,000) and, if owned by the town (one proposal), there are several

sources for very low interest loans for capital improvements. The engineers ran several revenue models with or without the golf course, with or without a 500 student campus. The OSC discussed the pros and cons of town ownership of a combined water district. It would be ideal for the town to have two water sources. Jenny gave Chris a copy of the Northfield Water District's annual report.

7:50 p.m. Jerry returns

Chris felt that the Landscape Partnership Grant and money from DCR would just about cover the costs of the conservation project whether the town or DCR owned the land. Surveying is still ongoing. The complicated and confusing title search will be forced to wait until the surveying is done. The surveyors have not found any in-holdings so far.

4. **Community Park committee update:**

Jerry, Joe and Sue met with the Selectboard, which decided that the Community Park Committee be a subcommittee of the Master Plan Implementation Committee formed to implement the recently approved Master Plan.

5. **Member comments:**

Joanne reminded everyone about the cookout at her house for the Americorps volunteers and Mount Grace Staff on Thursday, Jul 31st. She also announced that a new edition the Ch. 61 current use law is available at <http://masswoods.net/landowner-programs/chapter-61-current-use-tax-programs>.

Jerry: Sandra reminded Jerry that Jenny needs to be reappointed to the CPC. The board voted to reappoint Jenny to the Community Preservation Committee for a term of three years. (Sue/Joanne 4 – 0- 1)

Mike: Bob O'Connor from Executive Office of Environmental Affairs will visit Northfield to meet with Jamie Pottern from Mount Grace, Mike, and Bill Ames about the Ames conservation restriction.

6. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m. The next meeting will be Tuesday, Aug 12. (proposed).

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne McGee, Secretary