

Land Acquisition Fund Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
April 18, 2012

Attendees:

Marge Josephson
Neil Volkmar
Al Kenney
Colette Shuylman
Fran Frattini
Jerry Siegel
Laura Pettinato, Clerk

Chairman Marge Josephson called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

I. Review of Minutes of Meeting of January 18, 2012: Neil moves to accept the minutes, Fran seconds, all approve.

II. Board Membership and Nomination of Officers: Marge notes there is no board member from the Wetlands Commission. She says the B.O.S. appointed Andrea O'Connor as the Board representative (However, Andrea is away and unable to attend the meeting tonight). Marge does not want to be Chairman again, as she is concerned about a possible perceived conflict of interest (she is also President of the Land Trust) if she is Chairman. Colette comments that a workshop she attended recommends an overlap of members, but that was not referring to Chairs. Jerry notes that there is some overlap of agenda with representatives from other groups – the Naromi, P&Z, Inlands & Wetlands, Park & Rec., and the Selectman's group. He thinks to rule out everyone with some sort of overlap would only leave maybe 2 people, although he understands Marge's thoughts that there could be a perception of conflict from the outside. Fran nominates Andrea O'Connor as the Chairman, Jerry seconds the nomination. Marge mentions she already spoke with Andrea about this, and she said she would accept. Fran nominates Marge as Vice Chair, and Marge says she is willing to do that. Fran nominates Al as Secretary, and he responds that he would be happy to do that. There is no Treasurer. Fran makes a motion to accept the slate of Andrea O'Connor, Marge, and Al. Neil seconds the motion, all in favor.

III. Comments from the Public: No public comment, as no public present.

IV. Discussion of Open Space Plan submitted to Planning and Zoning Commission for inclusion in new POCD: Marge says the plan (17 pages) has gone through many revisions, and much effort has been put into this document. This is intended as an appendix to the POCD, which would stand as submitted. She wants it to be consistent with the P&Z plans, and the kinds of documentation that planimetrics puts in there.

Neil says it went to Barbara, and she passed it out in the last 2 weeks, and it is on her agenda for tomorrow night. Neil thinks that with planimetrics, the point is to make a consistent feel throughout the document. This stands out as one thing that is not consistent with the other things. Marge thinks that the content was to reflect what this group thought. Neil says if they would include this to make it look like the rest, it might flow better. Colette had ideas that maintaining rural character, preservation, trails, water resources, and open space would be part of it, but ours is a rather narrow definition. Neil does not see any conflicts with this. Marge and Colette had been discussing how much emphasis they should put on farming in this plan, and they are not sure how much is in the POCD. Neil says if each section is a couple of pages, there is language about supporting farming in there. He does not recall being very specific about what they could do, this was just to put together a framework that they would support farming. Colette feels it is important to have the farmland areas designated on the map. Marge says one of the questions she would have about the map (SLAFAB PRIORITY MAP), is that not everything in the big circles is all trees or farmland. She wonders if planimetrics will have information about the underlying soils, and she wonders if they could make the same type of map by soil type. Neil does not think they have that type of information or resources about Sherman. Marge was thinking if they should keep all the categories on the Priority Map. Neil says they may have the ability to 'clean up' and focus the map, based on land characteristics.

Colette thinks that the map and the list of prioritization of properties is the most important thing they can do today. Fran wants to know how the page numbering works on the document. Marge explains that she and Colette were using different programs. Al says if Marge sends him a word document, he can try to fix that. Marge says she made it a pdf so P & Z wouldn't change the document. Fran notices that on objectives and goals 'lakes and ponds' repeats twice. Otherwise, everything else looked good to her. Jerry says under strategies, "Do we want to put in anything to encourage public contact with legislatures and representatives to adopt statewide tax relief for tax credits." Colette says they did call for renewing the mil portion of the budget. Fran says they did not get any mil amount. Jerry asks if they made a presentation to the B.O.S. Marge says they gave the Selectmen a budget similar to last year. Jerry asks if anyone was at the budget meeting to explain why they wanted the mil rate. Marge says she was at the meeting, but she did not initiate a back-and-forth with the Selectmen about this. Fran notes that they do not have as many meetings per year as they say. Marge comments that the B.O.S., in their own internal meeting, decided what it was going to be.

Marge asks if this is a political stand at the state level. Neil thinks this plan is something to drive their actions for the next 10 years. He thinks it is something they want to encourage the Town to get behind and promote. Colette says it could go under federal/state grants funding. Al asks if they should talk about real estate transfer taxes in the strategies. Marge says this is what they are talking about.

Marge notes that Thomas Piel has entered the room, becoming the only audience member at the meeting.

Marge asked the Board to think about individual pieces of land or areas that should be included in the list. She has reviewed a list from the town of all ownerships of 25+ acres, in addition to some smaller ownerships. At the P&Z meeting, she says it was suggested that there should be a

list of the parcels that fit into these areas on the Priority Map. She asks if any other members know of important parcels.

Colette asks Marge for a copy of the list that matches the map from 2010.

Al says the Sherman LAB Land Selection Criteria document listed about 15 different things that helped them make the selection, a precursor of sorts as to why they prioritize the parcels the way that they do. He thinks it would be a good document -- an introductory section -- to add into the document.

Marge notes that in the past, there was legal counsel before P&Z, talking about P&Z having areas in town that are priorities for one reason or another. That is why this map with the areas on it came to exist, as opposed to just taking individual parcels one by one when they come up.

While all the properties are desirable, Neil feels the list does indeed help show what is a priority. Al says they wanted to prioritize, because if something came up, they could say we had it posted on a list, we had it as priority. Jerry notes that while a number of these areas are desirable, they don't need to be prioritized because they are essentially not capable of being developed. He says an example of this might be some areas in Timber Trails.

Jerry has a copy of a survey done several years back, showing the amount of acreage that might be developable, in order to develop this it would require significant changes to infrastructure. He thinks the board should look at these things by what is the most practical, if they are going on priorities.

Marge talks about the risk of development as one of the criteria in deciding what is going to be a priority right now. Marge says there has been an emphasis on farmland, because it is easiest to develop, and it can take a lot of houses. Neil says if they ever get to conservation development regulations in the next 10 years, this will become critical to driving that.

Al quickly mentions that he will send out that 'prioritized' document, then they can take these 13 items on the Parcels of Interest List, and figure out where they rank. Jerry would think things that are abutting existing protected areas would be a high priority. Al reads his list, which includes these criteria: Protection watershed/water resources/wetlands, agricultural value, linked to other protected land, historical significance, prime natural features, scenic value, non-commercial recreation, wildlife habitat, parcel size, wildlife viewing value, and development potential. Marge would like to add immediacy of risk of development as one of the criteria.

Marge says a big Excel spreadsheet was done a few years ago, after going through town records to see what was protected. All properties in town were done at that time. Al says he can change that Excel format, so this document will be more user friendly and printable for everyone.

Al mentions he would like to set the criteria up into some sort of order -- perhaps with abbreviations -- so they can put those next to the parcels of interest on the list, add up the criteria or assign them some sort of value. Marge and Neil don't think they need to do this right now, for

this particular document. Marge says it is important for P&Z to know that this is the map that they want, and that they identify the pieces that still need protection.

Marge notes that the Chapel Hill Property is in the New York City Watershed area, and the O'Dowd property is next to Tony's farm, but it is all woods. Fran says it was a large parcel. Marge inquires if other members know of other critical parcels. Neil says things overlooking the lake might be critical parcels. Fran mentions that she heard the Lake Authority wants a Sherman Ridge Line protection plan. If Sherman thinks Kent's Ridge-Line protection plan will work here, and if Sherman adopts it, they will use it as model for other towns around here.

Marge asks if Kent has a regulation that gives them authority to say if something is a ridge line. Fran does not know. Fran says the Watershed Committee at the Lake Authority said they would use Kent. Neil says it is one of the things that they would like to do in P&Z. Marge asks if these are true regulations or just suggestions. Neil recalls it as being actual regulations 'you can, you shall', etc. Kent's was based on what were called "viewsheds", to protect ridgelines from those viewpoints. He said the problem with this is that it could be considered arbitrary.

Marge comes back to protecting the look of the lake. She asks how much open land there is still that could be protected around the lake. Marge says the state forest doesn't come up to the very south end of Wagon Wheel. Jerry and Marge not sure if it goes down to Squantz Pond. There is another owner who owns 50 acres or so of a very steep hillside in Sherman, above Wagon Wheel. Fran says Mill Pond lots can't be subdivided any more than they are divided now. Fran understands that with the merger of Northeast Utilities and NStar, they created a landtrust, but since so many strings are attached with properties on Candlewood, those did not get put into the land trust. First Light owns under the lake. Northeast Utilities only owns above the 440 line. Fran says they should keep the two islands on here, as they just want to see them preserved. Those two islands are totally within Sherman. Marge says CL&P owns not quite 1,000 acres.

Marge says they can send the list out that Fran had with updates. Neil asks if the properties fit in the areas on the map, and Marge says for the most part they do. On the map, you can see that some of the areas go across the town line, because either a piece is very similar or ownership for a similar use. Neil wonders if they should coordinate with other towns, if they want to preserve something that crosses town lines. Marge says this holds true with Candlewood Lake Estates down into Vaughn's Neck – it is a complicated area, where all the groups having anything to do with the lake want to see everything protected as much as possible.

Marge says there is some federal highlands money available, probably not used for original purposes. She proposed to the DEP Representative, dealing with open spaces issues for this part of state, that they consider in the North part of town, depending on whether the owners are in agreement with a price (the Mosentahl and Eastman pieces). The highlands is federal money, and it has to go through the DEP. Highlands will pay up to 50%.

Marge talks about grants – they need a survey, biologists, lots of things. State did release open grants, and the deadline is the end of June. Marge does not know how feasible this is for Naromi to do. Marge says she received this info from 4 different sources, but did not see any proposals from the Town Office. The Town would have to come up with matching money for this. Neil

wonders if the Board of Selectmen would be asking for them to approach them for it first. Marge says a high priority for these grants is when you have several adjacent landowners, and they all want to see a section preserved. Marge thinks maybe within CT, across town lines, this might work.

Jerry has more questions on securing grants, and wonders if they would have to inquire about whether or not the Town would be interested in pursuing this, as the town would have to produce funds to some degree. Marge says they would have to have a willing seller, and in instances where town money has been used, the seller has approached the town, or the parcel has been listed with a realtor. One of the dilemmas they face now is that in terms of preservation for owners, real estate values are down, and they are not interested in selling at the current low prices.

Marge moved to adjourn the April 18, 2012 meeting of the Land Acquisition Fund Advisory Board, Neil seconds, all voting in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Prepared by,

Al Kenney, Secretary

Laura J. Pettinato, Clerk*

*** Please note that the tape used to record these minutes failed to record. Minutes are comprised of notes taken during live conversation and documents referenced throughout these minutes.**

These minutes are not considered official until they have been approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Land Acquisition Fund Advisory Board.