

Land Acquisition Committee
Minutes of Meeting
January 13, 2015
Lower Level Conference Room
Town Hall – 10 Mudge Way

PRESENT: Don Cullis, Chair; William Speciale; Tom Mulligan; Daniel Puffer;
Richard Torti, Caroline Fedele (end of meeting)

ABSENT: Lori Eggert

Mr. Cullis called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes from Previous Meetings

Meeting minutes for May 8, 2014 – motion to approve by Mr. Cullis, seconded by Mr. Mulligan, vote was 2-0-3 (abstains by Mr. Speciale, Mr. Puffer, and Mr. Torti who were not present on May 8th)

Meeting minutes for Nov. 13, 2014 – motion to approve by Mr. Cullis, seconded by Mr. Torti, vote was 3-0-2 (abstains by Mr. Mulligan and Mr. Speciale who were not present on Nov.13)

Meeting minutes for the executive session of Nov.13, 2014 – motion to approve by Mr. Cullis, seconded by Mr. Torti, vote was 3-0-2

Meeting minutes for Dec. 9, 2014 – motion to approve by Mr. Cullis, seconded by Mr. Speciale, vote was 4-0-1 (abstain by Mr. Mulligan who was not present Dec. 9) pending correction that Mr. Speciale was both present and absent when he was actually just present.

Meeting minutes for the executive session of Dec. 9, 2104 – motion to approve by Mr. Cullis, seconded by Mr. Speciale, vote was 4-0-1 pending correction that Mr. Speciale was both present and absent when he was actually just present

Standards for Ranking Potential Acquisition – Review Format

Mr. Cullis presented a summary of the Comprehensive Plan from Dec. 2013 and how it might relate to future targets the committee may wish to address in any ranking format or lists. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the fact that the town is 95% developed with only about 2.3% of that remainder being developable (non-wetland). Government and private protection currently exists for about 1/4 of all land in the town. According to the Comprehensive Plan (at the time it was published) 47 parcels with 5 or more acres of undeveloped or underdeveloped land exist, with 17 of those having 10 or more acres. It is assumed that some or most of these are on the current list of properties the committee is working from with regard to open space acquisition but this will need to be verified.

Action items specifically referenced as requiring Land Acquisition Committee participation from the Comprehensive Plan are:

- Craft a modern open space residential development 4-step plan
- Develop pedestrian and bike connectivity master plan
- Integrate planning and budgeting for capital projects for open space and trails
- Update the open space and recreation plan
- Consider creation of a private non-profit 501(c)3 – for rapid response of open space acquisition opportunities
- Channel sufficient capital investment into increasing bike and pedestrian trail connectivity
- Dialogue on options for fire station capacity
- Build a consensus for athletic field policy for the town

Additional areas to consider from the Comprehensive Plan but not specifically referenced as Land Acquisition Committee action items are:

- Wetland preservation and connectivity (especially for storm water management)
- Historic property preservation and protection
- School expansion (although this is cited as low priority at the time it was published)
- Affordable housing (although Bedford currently exceeds state requirements)

From this, suggested targets for acquisition and ranking are as follows:

- General open space
- Bike and pedestrian trail connections
- Wetlands (especially for connectivity and storm water management)
- Recreation/athletic field space
- Property for fire department relocation/expansion
- Acquisition and protection of historical properties
- School expansion

Mr. Speciale also mentioned that open space may be needed to offset wetland consumption by the new athletic fields to be built on the St. Michaels property.

Mr. Mulligan suggested that, if it remains an issue, potential sites for fire department expansion or relocation should take priority. Further, Mr. Mulligan suggested the Bedford Plaza Hotel site might make a good longer-term candidate given its location on the Great Rd. and the access this would retain to the entire area.

It was decided by the group that the existing open space list should be consulted to address these needs and that for any needs that were not met by the existing open space list, additional lists will need to be generated. Further details would be needed with regard to prioritization of the presented needs by dialogues with other committees and the selectmen.

Mr. Bagdonas had provided a comprehensive packet of maps detailing many different aspects of properties across the town. The group reviewed the packet. Mr. Torti felt the valuation map would be especially useful and requested a larger copy of this as well as a version citing structure value. Mr. Torti also wanted to know if the tool used to create this was publicly available or accessible by committee members directly. Mr. Mulligan expressed interest in a larger copy of the recreation based map (Open space map).

As an approach to address a specific town need not likely to be fulfilled on the open space list, Ms. Bagdonas had prepared maps of the parcels surrounding the Lane school, Davis school, and junior high/high school complex to investigate potential school expansion. Mr. Mulligan stated that of the 3 areas Lane and Davis may need additional field space and that, of those two, Lane had the greatest need. Those present felt it might be a good idea to contact some of parcels immediately bordering Lane to gauge long-term (not likely immediate) interest in selling their properties to the town. Mr. Torti proposed investigating 74, 76, 88, and 90 on Sweetwater Ave. and 1, 2, and 4 on the opposite side of the Narrow Gauge Rail Trail. All agreed that 74 and 76 are new builds and it was unlikely the owners would bring them to the market soon. Mr. Speciale and Mr. Mulligan proposed 339 given its position between outcroppings of school property. Mr. Speciale proposed 42, 50, 60, and 62 on Sweetwater Ave. as well given the easy access they would have to the school. Mr. Speciale also said he'd verify that 30 and 32 on Sweetwater Ave. were recent tear downs as that would reduce the likelihood that they would be available to the town for purchase in the near future. It was agreed that the properties discussed should be the subject of follow-up at the next meeting and that maps regarding those properties (especially topography, structure value, and property value) would be useful for that discussion.

It was agreed that no properties will be added to the Community Preservation Land Acquisition Fund parcel list as the existing candidates had already been proposed to be added or had been withdrawn from consideration by the landowner.

List of Contacts for Property and Easement Lists

No updates to existing list

Update on Potential Land Acquisition Contacts

No updates to contacts

Update on Proposed Easement Contacts

Mr. Torti shared that he obtained the contact information for a source at Middlesex College that he could approach regarding trail access to the college from the Zhangji parcels and will gauge their interest.

Approval of Next Meeting Dates

The next meeting was agreed to be Feb. 3, 2015 at 7:30 PM

The next agenda would include:

- Prioritization of town needs
- Evaluation of revised open space list to assess parcels on existing list for current needs
- Evaluation of properties surrounding Lane school to address any potential expansion
- Update on Potential Land Acquisition Contacts
- Update on Proposed Easement Contacts

Mr. Cullis made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Puffer, and passed 6-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Minutes prepared by Donald Cullis.

Minutes approved at meeting of April 14, 2015.