



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Open Space Committee

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Open Space Committee Zoom Meeting Minutes July 24, 2023

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on March 29, 2023, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public will be permitted.

Members in attendance (remotely): John Campbell, Chair; Brian Belfer; Bill Pierce; Dan Clark; Paul Cacciatore

Members absent: Leslie Harrison; Paul Tagliaferri

Others in attendance (Remotely): Vincent Vignaly, Conservation Agent

The Chair opened the meeting at 7pm.

Welcome New Recreation Commission Member and Discuss Open Member Slots—Mr. Campbell welcomed Paul Cacciatore and expressed his appreciation that Parks and Recreation finally had a liaison to Open Space. Mr. Cacciatore provided his background.

Discussion About Setting Regular Meeting Time as 4th Monday of Odd Months—Members decided to meet on the 4th Monday on odd months, beginning with September 25.

Election of Officers: Chair and Vice Chair—Tabled to the next meeting when possibly all members will be in attendance.

Outreach Plan for Northborough Landowners Regarding Conservation: Update list and Options

302 Church Street: Mr. Vignaly mentioned that he'd spoken to Paul Maney, who had indicated that he had received a letter from the Town and was not interested. Discussion followed regarding outreach at that location. The tree farm no longer appears active. Mr. Campbell felt it was an important piece of land to keep on the list.

0 Indian Meadow Drive: Mr. Campbell wanted to follow up on that parcel since discussion was last held with the owner about 5 years ago who, at that time, indicated they liked the aspect of keeping the golf course. Ms. Davies felt it might be worth engaging with Sudbury Valley Trustees for some ideas, as they have successfully managed to conserve the Southborough golf course located on route 85. Mr. Campbell will forward to Mr. Vignaly a copy of a letter previously sent.

Brigham Street—Mr. Campbell thought that this committee had held conversations in the past regarding a parcel near the driving range. Ms. Davies believed he was referring to 92 School Street, where a house was ultimately built. Mr. Cacciatore suggested adding 142 Brigham Street (the current location of the Golf Teaching Center) as an item for outreach. Ms. Davies agreed and said there are several attractive parcels on School Street and South Street that are worth conserving. Discussion followed. Mr. Campbell mentioned a scenario in which the golf course decided to relocate the practice range closer to the golf course. Ms. Davies will send Mr. Vignaly addresses for additional properties to include on the outreach list.

242 Green Street: Ms. Davies noted that this property has been on the market for some time. Mr. Belfer said if the Town can't buy it, but someone else does, that it would be ideal to get an easement along the brook to re-establish trail connectivity up to Pisgah from Green Street. Mr. Campbell will reach out to the listing agent, Michael Durkin.

260 West Street: Ms. Davies asked if Mr. Clark had an update on this property. Mr. Clark said it appeared that the land is being actively used for farming. Ms. Davies thought it would be worthwhile to send information regarding the APR program.

Mr. Campbell suggested that their next meeting should include in-depth discussion regarding outreach, specifically which owners should be sent letters; it would get the campaign off to a good start. Mr. Cacciatore said it seems like a lot of activity happened in 2017, and asked why that was. Ms. Davies believed that letters were sent in batches, with the first round being around 2014 and then again a few years later. Mr. Cacciatore suggested setting a cadence on certain properties where they are reaching out every three years or so, and to determine what that procedure is.

Crawford Street—Mr. Clark noted the donations made on Crawford Street to SVT. Ms. Davies said there was one donated to SVT after it was turned down by the Town; the Town couldn't acquire fee interest because there was no public access. SVT has an agreement for access over 329 Crawford to host site walks once a year or so. Mr. Vignaly said there are four frontage lots currently working through the Town's approval process. Ms. Davies added that the 325 Crawford piece is surrounded by development.

It was confirmed that the items in red on the spreadsheet are developed and can be taken off the list.

Ms. Davies was frustrated that the parcels on Lincoln Street adjacent to Melican Middle School now had houses when they'd always been told that the land there was undevelopable. The school has needed fields for some time. Mr. Cacciatore thought the committee should continue to keep the properties around Melican in mind. Ms. Davies said that a neighbor bought property behind the newly built houses to keep it open but there is not much left.

0 Auger: Ms. Davies said there had been discussion regarding buying that, but no funds available, and she believed a neighbor ended up buying it to keep it open. She felt it would be worthwhile to add to the list.

Ms. Davies believed there is more money to be had at the state level for conservation now because of all the federal funding for water quality and climate resilience. They may have better chances now of acquiring property when it is available. She will follow up on grant opportunities.

Action Items to Support the Master Plan: Review Open Space Related Goals—Mr. Campbell said that when Scott Rogers was a member of this committee, he helped highlight and identify some projects in the Master Plan where the Open Space Committee was involved. He wondered what might be done in the shorter term to keep the momentum going for Downtown revitalization. Some ideas he had included acquiring the parcel of land where Monroe and Gale Streets meet (11 Monroe St) to enhance walkability there; to see if there are parcels in Town that could be acquired to be an extension of a park or some kind of recreational use; if some of the Harvey land (77 Main St.) that borders the river could be parceled off as park land.

Ms. Davies mentioned that Bolton had acquired a gas station on its Main Street and turned it into a town common. She felt that since the Harvey property is located on the Assabet River, it made an even more compelling case for some state funding. She understood that, based on the Master Plan, at least some of it would be developed but that they could start the conversations to determine what's going to be open space and what piece is going to be put out to bid for a developer. She mentioned the gas station next to the Town Common (35 West Main St.) and wondered what could be done there, the current owner is not interested

in making changes at this time but she thought they should keep an open dialogue. She thought that the Harvey property, the gas station, 16 Gale Street and 11 Monroe should be added to the outreach list, with individualized letters as a starting point.

Mr. Pierce suggested a river walk along Cold Harbor Brook could be created with access to the property where the old fire station was (13 Church St.), where the current fire station is (11 Pierce St.), and the lot where R&T Furniture once was (40 West Main St.). Ms. Davies agreed and said there is a natural crossing that comes across Hudson, goes down to the river and under to Cold Harbor Brook, across Church Street. She suggested having conversations with some landowners regarding easements; it'd be worth an ask. Ms. Davies thought that for the Master Plan to really happen, this committee needs to play a role in having these conversations with people about the things that could be open space, trails, or recreation.

Mr. Campbell agreed and suggested that Ms. Davies help broach that with the Master Plan Implementation Committee so that they are working in concert. Ms. Davies said that they don't have a say in what gets developed unless the Town owns the land, the Harvey location is unknown, however it did just change ownership. Mr. Campbell said it was ironic that it's been included in the Master Plan potential for over a year and suddenly it changed ownership.

Mr. Cacciatore reiterated the idea of setting up a cadence; as soon as this committee identifies a parcel of land that is of interest, a letter of interest should be sent. Then set up a cadence of two or three years to check back in because properties change hands. This way there will be a paper trail for future committee members to follow.

Ms. Davies suggested that they should look at Northborough's MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness) plan to see if it is possible to make any amendments where they can support land conservation in certain strategic areas of town. She thought it would be worth looking at to see what they can do and get ready to support land acquisitions.

Potential CPA Projects for 2024 (FY25)—Mr. Campbell said that if Open Space is going to request conservation money again, it would be great if they had more definition as to their targets for land acquisition. Ms. Davies said his discussion about supporting the Master Plan's Downtown plan was compelling; they are requesting funds so that they can help enable the implementation of the Downtown plan. Mr. Campbell said that was a valid point, it's another reason to augment conservation money savings because there's going to be a place to use it to support the Master Plan. Ms. Davies said it doesn't mean that it must be used on a project that's going to be solely Conservation, but that some can be funded which will allow for funding for the other pieces to happen.

Mr. Campbell asked Mr. Cacciatore if he was aware of any Recreation projects that will be requesting CPA funds. Mr. Cacciatore said there was nothing official yet.

Consideration of January 23, 2023 Minutes for Acceptance—Mr. Campbell had one edit. Discussion followed. Mr. Pierce made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, Mr. Clark seconded the motion. Roll call vote followed, all were in favor except for Mr. Cacciatore, who was not a member of Open Space at that time.

Mr. Pierce made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Belfer seconded the motion. Roll call vote, all were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27pm.

Respectively Submitted by
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary